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DE FOIX;

OR,

SKETCHES OF THE MANNERS AND CUSTOMS OF THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY.

An *Historical Romance.*

BY ANNA ELIZA BRAY,
LATE MRS. CHARLES STOTHARD,

AUTHOR OF LETTERS WRITTEN DURING A TOUR THROUGH NORMANDY,
BRITANNY, AND OTHER PARTS OF FRANCE, IN 1818; MEMOIRS
OF THE LIFE OF THE LATE CHARLES ALFRED STOTHARD,
F. S. A. &C. &C. &C.

—Knights

Armed for lists—

—The minstralcie, the service at the feste,
The great geftes to the most and leste,
The rich array of Theseus' paleis,
And who sate first and last upon the deis,
What ladies fayrest ben or best dancing,
Or which of them can carole best or sing.—
Of all this make I mentioun.—

CHAUCER.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR

LONGMAN, REES, ORME, BROWN, AND GREEN,
PATERNOSTER-ROW.

1826.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY THOMAS DAVISON, WHITEFRIARS.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

IT will appear evident to the erudite reader, that the author of this work has been indebted to the delightful pages of Froissart for the groundwork of her narrative.

Froissart for some time resided at the castle of Gaston Phœbus, Count de Foix ; and as he enjoyed a familiar intercourse with that celebrated prince, and many distinguished knights of his suite, we may well suppose he possessed an opportunity of gaining much authentic intelligence respecting the various characters and events of his court. The melancholy death of

the youthful Gaston de Foix ; the fate of Sir Peter Arnaut de Bearn ; the wars with Armagnac and Lourde ; the detention of the lands of the Lady Jane of Boulogne, and other circumstances, are all mentioned by the venerable chronicler as events that became known to him whilst visiting the court of Orthes.

These circumstances have therefore been interwoven by the author in the tissue of her story. The truth of history has not been violated in important facts, while imagination has filled up the outline with characters and events suited to the nature of Romance. In sketching the manners and customs of the period in which the plot of her work is laid, she has also chiefly followed the ocular testimony of Froissart : she has, however, derived some useful in-

formation from the writers on ancient Chivalry, particularly from the excellent treatise of St. Palaye.

The author feels a melancholy pleasure in stating, that her knowledge relative to the armour, &c. worn during the period described, was gained from an attentive study of the works* of her lamented husband, the late Mr. Charles Stothard, whose pen and pencil were so successfully employed in affording copious and valuable illustrations of the antiquities of the middle ages.

Vicarage, Tavistock, Devon,
November 1, 1825.

* See the "Monumental Effigies of Great Britain," drawn and etched by the late Charles Alfred Stothard, F.S.A.; also his papers inserted in the "Memoirs" of his life, published by Messrs. Longman and Co.

CONTENTS

OF

VOLUME I.

	Page
CHAP. I. The Forest	1
CHAP. II. The Priory	38
CHAP. III. The Supper	65
CHAP. IV. The Court	106
CHAP. V. The Inquiry	141
CHAP. VI. The Token	151
CHAP. VII. The Interview	178
CHAP. VIII. The Banquet	211
CHAP. IX. The Vigil of Arms	254

ERRATA.

Line 16, page 10, *for* holy patience, *read* a true and holy patience.
— 17, — 10, *for* eaten with thee, *read* eaten with thee, my master.
— 20, — 35, *for* fair, *read* favour.
In the note, 51, *for* at his period, *read* at this period.
— 1, — 69, *for* objectto, *read* object to.
— 14, — 68, *for* two, *read* one.
— 11, — 71, *for* round, *read* around.
— 8, — 106, *for* recesses which, *read* recesses of which.
— 5, — 107, *for* massive towers within their enclosure ; upon,
 read massive towers ; within their enclosure
 upon.
— 17, — 128, *for* a token, *read* Such a token.
— 13, — 183, *for* worshipped that power, *read* worshipped one
 God, that power.
— 9, — 246, *for* illuminated, *read* illumined.
— 17, — 251, *or* my Father, *read* my God.
— 7, — 272, *for* hear a full, *read* have a full.
— 2, — 273, *for* its performance, *read* its full performance.

D E F O I X.

CHAPTER I.

THE FOREST.

A knight there was, and that a worthy man,
That fro the time, that he firsste began,
To ride out, he loved chivalrie
Trouthe and honour, fredom, and courtesie.

CHAUCER.

IT was towards the close of an unusually sultry day, in the month of August, during a summer of the latter part of the fourteenth century, when the clouds gathering thick and portentous, obscured the glowing brilliancy of a setting sun, that illumined the richly wooded hills of the fertile province of Bearn. The birds fast scudded to their covert, whilst, eager on the wing, their little throats chirped forth a cheerless and a warning note. The rustling of the leaves, agitated by the rising of the tempest, broke upon

the silence of evening in low sounds. The winds suddenly arose, and now swept along in one continued rush; now paused, and again burst in loud and lengthened cadence, above the surrounding woods, bending their lofty tops, with an undulating motion, like a flood of “mighty waters.”

These warnings were not unheeded by two persons, who rode along a solitary path, in the direction towards the Castle of Gaston Phœbus, Count de Foix, lord of the provinces of Foix and Bearn. So intricate was the path, and so circuitous in its course, that none but those well acquainted with the track, could with any degree of certainty venture upon it. The foremost horseman was well mounted upon a young and beautiful courser, which though somewhat jaded with travel, seemed yet to bear his rider, with a stately, and erect mien, as if conscious of the proud burden that bestrode his sleek and pampered sides.

The Knight, (for such he was,) who rode thus gallantly along, appeared, from his well turned limbs, his ample chest, and graceful carriage, to be of gentle degree and in the very flower of his youth: while the easy manage of his steed,

showed him an accomplished horseman: a character, which the youth of the period, eagerly aspired to bear, as it was held honourable and necessary in the military qualifications for a knight. He was clad in polished steel, his head guarded by a glittering basinet, from the pointed crown of which, arose a heron's plume. The visor was raised, and displayed a countenance of manly beauty, characterized by the lofty brow, and the proud glance of an eye, that spoke a mind of haughty bearing. His mustachios fell on either side his upper lip, over the mail that closely enveloped his face. His haubergeon, (or coat of mail,) was covered by a surcoat of red velvet, upon which was wrought, purfled with pearls, on a field azure, six white martlets.

In his strong, and gauntleted hand, he held a lance, attached to the end of which was a small red pennon. His sword, emblazoned like his surcoat, was slung by a strap round his neck, supported by his bridle arm, and secured, at the pommel, by a chain of silver, which was attached to the right of his breast, just below the camail (a piece of chain-mail armour), worn about the

neck dependent from the basinet to the shoulders. His feet, guarded by the soleret, or pointed shoe, rested in stirrups of enamelled steel.

The horse that bore this comely Knight, was covered with housings of silk, which hung from either side the animal, embroidered with the arms of his rider upon a ground of blue and silver. On the forehead of the courser, appeared a small plate, called the chanfrain, formed of metal, and covered with velvet, having the six white martlets worked upon it in pearls.

The Esquire of the Knight, followed his master's steps, well mounted upon a handsome, chestnut-coloured horse. His head was surmounted by a steel cap, and his body clothed in a thick, quilted coat of leather, closely set with gilt nails; little armour, either plate, or mail, being at this time worn by an Esquire. He was armed with a sword; and from the saddle-bow, hung an axe. There, also, depended the helmet of his master; as that ponderous guard for the head, was alone worn by the Knight, over the basinet, in tournament or battle.

For some time, the travellers journeyed on in

silence, which was at length broken by the foremost rider, who, turning to his Esquire, exclaimed, “ Agos, yonder clouds look black, and threatening. If we reach not this castle ere night-fall, I see little else than the prospect of losing our way in the dark, or of passing the time till morning dawns under the shelter of these forest trees.”

“ They will afford but a sorry shelter against the pelting of such a storm as seems coming up yonder,” replied the Esquire, “ and craving your pardon, Sir Equitan, we have other mishaps to fear, besides thunder bolts, and showers. For it seems not to live in your knightly remembrance, that we have this day ridden seven good leagues, since we washed our throats with the stirrup cup, or tasted the comfort of a pot-tage. For my own part, although I fear not the value of a rusty dagger, a night’s lodging in the open air, while the lightning plays like a will o’ the wisp upon my steel cap, yet I would have wherewithal to keep my spirits up ; but mayhap you think not of these things, but rather of that

new surcoat, and those gay housings, you are dight withal. And sooth to say, they suit but ill with such a night, as we are like to have of it. For myself, who care not the spoiling of the best new jerkin that ever Squire wore, there is no mischance, or foe I heed to meet so much as hunger. A well conditioned soldier has but one foe to wrestle with, the enemy of his master, but a starving man hath another, and a stronger, in the danger of his own necessity. By the holy bones of St. Anthony, though this were the eve of his day, were it as strict a fast as ever priest enjoined, I would eat the first slice of a roasted kid that came in my way, and give ten marks to-morrow morning to a Romish pardoner, to sell me an absolution for my sin, rather than endure this craving of the body's citadel."

" If thy hunger be so importunate, Agos," said the Knight, " the nearest way to satisfy that, and my desire to clear this storm, lies, not in vain prating, but in some effort to find the right road through these intricate turnings.

Prithee ride forward, and see if thou canst light on either traveller or hind, who may counsel us the way to our destination."

"That will I, truly," replied the Esquire. "Tarry you here, Sir Equitan, and if I find not the way through these brakes and wild paths, it will be the worse for thy bright armour, that shall make thee glitter like a sun beam, and rank first amongst the gay Knights who throng the court of the gallant Count de Foix. But fear not, my master; in pity to thy bravery, and my own stomach, I promise a speedy return."

So saying, the hungry Esquire spurred his horse, and set off in quest of some intelligence to guide them through the wood. Agos de Guisfort, (for such is the name by which our Esquire was known,) for some time wandered on through paths that seemed rather to increase in intricacy than to offer any chance of termination. Here and there the way was impeded by the large and spreading boughs of some oak tree, whose venerable trunk was encircled with tendrils of green ivy, stealing on

from branch to branch, as they twined about its antique limbs.

The evening drew on apace, whilst Agos yet searched about in vain; now turning to the right, now to the left, then back again; sometimes pausing to catch a low and distant sound, in the faint hope that it might proceed from the habitation of a human being. At length the dim shade of twilight gradually obscured the surrounding objects, and the thick clouds that gathered in the west, rising, as it were, towards the centre of the heavens, rolled on slowly, till they settled into one dense, black mass, which seemed every moment about to burst upon the woods beneath. Agos looked again through their intricacies, yet nothing appeared but the deep red light that tinged the horizon, and was here and there discovered through the boughs of the trees.

The Esquire, tired of a hopeless search, and despairing to find the path, now first remembered, that should he longer tarry, his difficulties might be increased by a second vain attempt, that of finding the way back to his master,

guided only by the dim light of evening, and his own imperfect recollection of the track. Thus was he doubly doubtful; and as many persons, who, while two threatening evils lie before them, when they should seize on the readiest mode to escape from that which is most certain, suffer the time for action to elapse in deliberation, till all hope is past; so it is most likely would Agos now have done, had not the case decided for itself, by the appearance of Sir Equitan: for the knight, tired of waiting for his tardy esquire, had followed him by the track of his horse's feet in the ground, and joined him at the moment the first, distant peal of thunder muttered in a low and continued sound.

“ Agos,” said Sir Equitan, “ it is vain to seek for human direction in such a place, as this wild forest, and at such a time. We have assuredly lost our road; let us guide our horses to yonder knoll where the trees are thickest, and there rest till morning shall relieve us from our present strait.”

Agos paused, and ere he made a reply, seemed to be pondering if there were any scheme, or

invention within the compass of his own brain, that could supply a remedy against a supperless lodging in a lonely wood. “ I have seen much, and endured much,” at length exclaimed the Esquire, “ but never till this hour, did I look to satisfy my hunger by the air, my thirst by the rain-drops, to find rest in a hurricane, and to say matins with the thunder for a chorus. But such is the life of those, who think to gain Heaven and good fortune by the way of arms. Nevertheless, Sir Equitan, when no help can be found, we must even take up a friar’s trade, and with something more of honesty; for what they preach we need practise, and show to these trees, for these are likely to be our only witnesses, a holy patience. I have eaten with thee, I have pledged thee in the wine-cup, and this night will I fast with thee; but such a fast as the Devil shall make account of, for it is sore against the will.”

The travellers now proceeded as fast as the path, over-grown with brambles, and almost choked with long grass, and weeds, would admit. They had nearly gained the knoll, when

suddenly a slight rustling of the leaves was heard near them ; and immediately a quick and light step, as if of some one who hastily passed on, struck upon their ear.

“ Stop ! whoever thou art, for the love of Heaven and all the Saints,” exclaimed Agos, “stop, and guide two starving travellers through these dismal paths.”

No answer was returned, and Agos, springing from his horse, gave the reins to Sir Equitan to hold the animal, and made immediately towards the spot whence the steps were heard, with the quick and eager effort which men use when rushing upon an enterprise they are determined to accomplish. The path through which he ran, directly crossed a second path that led from another part of the forest. The Esquire paused not a moment, and in his haste to meet the unknown person, the sound of whose steps had alone been his guide, he came so suddenly in contact with him, that, like two vessels carried on, the one by a fresh gale, and the other by a rapid current, they met, and struck with such

force, that the weaker was nearly borne down by the stronger.

Agos, who had thus caused the stranger almost to measure his length upon the ground, and fearing lest upon his rising he should lose the only opportunity that seemed likely to offer itself to free them from their perplexity, scarcely knowing what he did, suddenly and without explanation seized upon the other, and bade him for the love of St. Mary to give some direction, or to guide him through the forest.

“ And who are you,” replied the stranger, “ who thus rudely demand it? your rough courtesy may be repaid in kind. I know not that either my leisure or my inclination may wait upon your occasions. I am not used to be commanded by such as you appear. These woods offer wide paths, and liberty enough, for such as have known perhaps the prison, and the gyves.”

“ The prison and the gyves !” re-echoed Agos. “ Hark thee ! youngster, for you are but a boy. If that lambs wool, that grows upon your head, but visits not your chin, did not protect you,

my steel had paid such insolence, and I had taught you, that no leech can lay the fever of a saucy tongue with half so cool a medicine. I am a gentleman; and therefore guide me, and yonder knight, who is riding towards us, through this forest, or I will use one of its boughs so well upon your back, that you shall need no penitential scourge for many days to come."

"Keep your threats for those who may need them," replied the stranger, "I do not fear you. Let me pass on, for whilst I tarry, I shall but laugh at the folly of one, who thinks to find assistance at his need by the use of a rough hand, and the asking of a rude tongue."

Agos, whose temper was none of the coolest, was now roused between the dread of the prospect before him, and the insolence of the stranger, to such a height, that he had raised his arm, to put part of his threat in execution, when Sir Equitan rode up, and by his presence checked the anger of the one, and the audacity of the other.

"What foolish broil is this?" said the knight; "you left me but now to seek some way to

escape the discomorts of the night passed in a lonely wood, and do you think to cure the evil by an idle quarrel with a mere youth? Wherefore is all this? but our necessities have little time for debate. Prithee tell me, young stranger, are you of these parts? and can you guide me to the castle of the noble Gaston Phœbus, Count de Foix? I will repay your pains with something more than thanks."

"I can, sir Knight," replied the boy, in a gentler manner, "I can guide you to my lord de Foix, but your thanks shall be my only guerdon; for I am not one of those who make a craft of service. Yet you shall hardly reach the castle ere nightfall. I eame thencee to-day, and passed some hours at angling in a neighbouring stream, that waters this forest. Whilst waiting for one of my companions, who promised there to join me, and bear me company back to the castle; exhausted with fatigue, and heat, I threw myself under an oak tree, and having fallen asleep, am but now awake, to find myself alone, night coming on, with a storm for its herald. My haste was little less than yours to

seek shelter, and I was about to make my way to the monastery of St. Mary's, which stands upon the borders of this forest. Thither can I conduct you, and I doubt not Prior Philip will give you weleome, and a lodging for the night. And when day returns I will be your guide to the castle of my noble master, the Count de Foix."

"Let us on then, good youth," said Sir Equitan, "and prithee mount behind me; it will save your labour, and hasten our purpose, and I will guide the horse as you direet."

The boy instantly sprang up, and seated himself upon the courser, with the light and agile bound of one accustomed to the athletic exercises of the youth of that period. "Thou art nimble as a hare," cried Sir Equitan, "when she springs from her pursuers. I will warrant thee used to the manage, and the chase. Tell me who art thou? what is thy state, and thy name?"

"Truly," answered the boy, "I am one of those who have had some rubs with Fortune, in her angry mood. I was born in England. My parents were of gentle blood but poor, for the

wars had ruined them. They died when I was yet a child; and some time after, I followed a gallant knight, who was my kinsman, in the service of a page. We came into France, and at length visited the court of the Count de Foix, where I was so well liked for my qualities, that on my master's return to his native country he left me at Orthes, in the honourable employment of page to the beauteous lady Jane of Boulogne, who is a ward to my lord de Foix."

"And what are your qualities," said Agos, "that should constitute you a Squire of Dames? do they lie in that malapert tongue? Is it for that you are the chosen favourite to attend my lady, when she needs a civil varlet?"

"My qualities," rejoined the page, "are such as you are little acquainted with, having no spice of them in your own rude spirit. I ride with my lady to the chase, I awake the echoes of the wood, that mock my merry horn. And sometimes, before the lark sings his matins to the dawn, before his wing can brush the fresh dew from the rose, I pluck it for her. Sometimes I soothe her with my song. In her

chamber I discourse on love and chivalry. I follow her to mass, to court, or to shrift. When she is merry I laugh with her, when sad I weep. I can bear a letter for my lady, a token or a message. I can speak the truth to her, and now and then I can tell a lie for her. In short I am page of honour to the fairest lady that Heaven ever smiled upon. This is my state, and for my name, it is simply William, or as men call me, in memory of my birth, Will of the West, the merry English page."

"Thou hast most page-like qualities indeed," said Sir Equitan, "and of thy lady, who is so fair, thou shalt hereafter tell me more. But Agos has advanced before us. Who is it that crosses our path, and even now stops him? I cannot plainly distinguish through the twilight, but by his long robes, it seems as if it were some one clad in the garb of a monk."

And so it was. For upon Agos having advanced a few paces before his master, whilst William was summing up his own qualities, he was suddenly stopt and accosted by one of the order

of St. Francis, or the Friars Minor, whose duty it was to wander about the world preaching boldly the gospel of Christ, warning the sinner, encouraging the penitent, and denouncing the judgments of God, without fear, or respect of persons. Begging as pilgrims, and receiving from the hand of Charity, the common necessities of life.

The friar, who now addressed Agos, was attired in the habit of his order, in a long gown of gray stuff, surmounted by a black mantle, that fell in ample folds about his limbs. A white linen cloth appeared around his chin and neck, and hung as low as the bosom. A cord of common rope, from which depended a rosary and cross, was girt about his waist. His feet were bare.

“ What would you, friend, with me?” inquired Agos, who seemed impatient of the least delay. “ We have no time to lose; speak quickly, and let me pass on. You cross my path.”

“ I am a poor brother,” said the friar, “ of the order of St. Francis, I seek hereabouts the

monastery of St. Mary; where I mean this night to crave the rights of charity, and I pray you to direct me to it."

"Thither we are going ourselves," replied Sir Equitan, who had stopt his horse to listen to the friar; "you are welcome, holy man, to bear us company."

"Thanks," said the stranger, "I will gladly go with you."

"Get up then behind me," cried Agos, "without delay. Say no more thanks, and in Heaven's name let us hasten on."

"I may not do that," replied the Franciscan: "know ye not that a brother of the order of the blessed St. Francis is forbidden alike to ride, or to cover his feet, that he may always be exposed to hardship and toil; that as travel is a part of his duty, he may have a constant cause of pain and mortification present with him, in his way of life, which is destined to wanderings, poverty, and obedience."

"For thy *wanderings*—holy friar," said Agos, "thou canst not have a fitter place than these woods to exercise them in; and here too thy

poverty will find no tempter to shake its virtue ; for thy *obedience*—should the wicked spirit get the mastery, and bid thee hang thyself, to be rid of such evils, these trees are high enough to swing upon. And thy own cord will do vengeance on thy neck for the sorrows it has spared thy back. If thou wilt go with us, why mount behind me, it is but confessing another sin ; and thou wilt have the plea of necessity for its commission, which all sinners cannot offer. Those who sin wantonly, do it for the pleasure of Satan ; those who transgress to follow mere inclination, to satisfy their own. But the sins of necessity are such as a man may sleep under, and cure by an extra whipping, and for which the saints and the church provide wholesome remedies. But if thou wilt be obstinate we must even ride on, and bid thee exercise another christian virtue, that of patience with thy enemies, for thou wilt not call such as leave thee benighted in a wood, thy friends.”

“ I forgive your jests,” said the friar, “ but I will not break the vow of my order. No ! I would sooner perish. Good even’ to you, friend,

for such I will still call you, as my fellow being, as the creature of that good Providence whom I serve, and who will not abandon one, that observes the vows made at his altar."

"We will not leave you thus," said Sir Equitan; "no, holy man, you who respect the obligation of your vows to Heaven, shall find that we respect the charities of man to man: walk by our horses' sides, and we will slacken our pace to accommodate yours."

"We are not far," observed the page, "from the monastery of St. Mary, we may yet reach it before the storm bursts upon us."

To the infinite dissatisfaction of Agos, the whole party now slackened their pace to accommodate the poor Franciscan, whose fatigue did not allow him to make any great speed. Agos had little reverence for friars of any kind, and could ill brook the least delay for their service, but he was obliged to submit to the will of his master. Agos had led the free and joyous life of arms, and though from habit he feared not death in the field, yet his imagination, pictured it to him,

in terrific colours, when its visitation was accompanied by hunger in the woods.

Whilst the party journeyed on towards the monastery, Sir Equitan questioned the friar respecting the purpose of his present wanderings, and was surprised to hear, that he was going to the castle of the Count de Foix. “Surely, holy man,” said he, “the festival which that lord is about to hold, the gay court, thronged by high born dames of rarest beauty, by knights from the most distant provinces of France, can be no place for one of your profession.”

“ You are in error,” replied the friar, “ this festival is the very cause of my going thither. I go to warn the young of the deluding snares of pleasure; to show the old, that whilst they revel, they do it upon the very verge of the grave, that is opening to receive them. In fine I go to preach the terrors of a future judgment, to denounce vengeance on the sinner. I have before visited the court of De Foix, when I spoke to the Count such things, as it would have been better for himself, had he heeded them. I warned

him of the consequence of passion. Truth made me bold, but her simple words sound harsh in the ear of princes; my warning was neglected, and my lord de Foix—but no more of that. I seek his court again, and for a better purpose. Some feelings, some objects I surely must find changed. Yet no matter, I will still speak with the voice of truth. In this life the fulfilment of our duties, must not be measured by their success; it is enough for us, that we take heed to practise them. Their benefit or their failure rests with Heaven.”

“ You speak somewhat mysteriously of my lord de Foix,” said the page; “ I am of his household. I have been sheltered by his bounty, and fed at his board. And more than this, I have had from him, what to the poor dependant is of greater worth than the gold of prinees, I have had gracious words of kindness from him. Thus bound to love the Count de Foix, I will not rest silent, and hear my master named in terms that imply dishonour. I know him to be great and noble. Speak the truth, and that shall never defame him.”

“ Heaven forbid, I should speak other than truth,” replied the friar. “ I know De Foix to be great and noble, where passion does not interfere. I can speak his praise, but I cannot flatter. Yet this is not the point, I have uttered nothing derogatory to his honour, nor to his dignity.”

“ You have uttered no positive accusation,” said Sir Equitan, “ but still you dropt some words, sufficient to excite curiosity, if not suspicion. Since you coupled your remarks with a degree of insinuation, and insinuations are worse than a direct charge: the latter speaks plainly, and may be challenged by direct means, it is like a foe, who meets us in the light of day; but insinuation, like the assassin, who stabs us in the dark, deals forth the wound, whilst the destroyer is shrouded from detection.”

“ Ay,” said Agos, gladly putting in a word, when the discourse was likely not to be very favourable to the friar, “ give me any thing but fighting in ambush; I like no archer hid behind a hedge; yet even he, when his arrows are all spent, can harm no more: yet draw but a monk’s

cowl over your head, and closed in by a hedge like that, the tongue shall let fly such shafts of detraction, that never cease, till they kill the character at least, if not the man."

" Peace, sinner," said the friar: " defame not those whose tongues are consecrated to the will of Heaven. Our just reprobation of sin, is termed by the world, slander, our admonitions insolence. But what good thing is there that prejudice will not despise? The very virtues of the just are a reproach to the evil minded; and the bad part of mankind, judging the hearts of others by the dark colour of their own, attribute to all alike, either open sin, or hypocrisy. For these things we grieve. Yet no man is perfect, and to our own character of monitor in reprobation for the errors and crimes of other men, we have to add, that of penitent for our own."

" In faith, a wholesome argument," cried Agos, " that should help thy conscience to let thee get up behind me upon my horse, and not delay us thus by preaching in the woods: for as I am, what thou termest me, a sinner, thou, who art a

penitent, should give me thy assistance. For notwithstanding thy admonitions, depend upon it, sin will ever ride on first, and give penitence the crupper; seldom will she resign the reins, if she be once mounted, till either a great fall, or mere weariness, oblige her to it: for she gains her firm sitting, just as much by habit as a horseman does his place in the saddle."

"Your words are light, and yet they speak too sad a truth," rejoined the Franciscan.

The page now declared they were near the boundary walls of the monastery of St. Mary, and the party pursued their route, much rejoiced at the intelligence, yet little disposed for conversation during the remainder of the way.

And thus shall we leave them, to finish their little journey towards the monastery, whilst we say a word or two to the reader, in our own character, proposing to be to him, like the chorus in the plays of the olden time, who, when a seasonable pause occurred by the close of a scene, or the ending of an act, just stept in before the curtain, and gave the audience such

intelligence as it was most fitting they should receive, for the better comprehension of the plot, and circumstances that were going on, during the performance of the piece, but which they were not likely to gather, in plain and absolute terms, from the characters themselves. Following therefore a similar intention, with a hope of communicating to our reader whatever knowledge we may possess of our subject, and giving him at least as clear a view as we ourselves have of the scene of our story, we shall now offer a few remarks respecting feudal manners, and the ancient and honourable office of page, an office so proudly held by our young friend William, or Will of the West.

At a time when three fourths of Europe might be justly considered in a barbarous and uncultivated state of society, the exercise of arms in some measure, supplied the imperfect administration of defective laws: many being compelled to withstand the efforts of tyranny, or the rapine of injustice, by individual prowess. So that those claims of liberty, and natural right, which in more civilized times are dispensed by the

legislator, were then in many instances alone to be supported by the point of the sword.

The plea of necessity, is generally that of nature, and whilst it was confined by our ancestors to the defence of what every man might justly feel to be his own property, or privileges, much might be said, in favor both of its utility, and of its moral justice. The abuse therefore of the system, and not its existence, became dangerous. The passions of individuals interfered, created causes of enmity, and pleas of discontent, to satisfy some private end that had no foundation in natural right. Thus were the weak or the defenceless, frequently at the mercy of any one who possessed the means, or the power to accomplish the purposes of a private enmity.

The abasement and misery of the people, have ever been found the certain consequences of the unlimited exercise of arbitrary power, as it is alone in the general administration of impartial laws, that a barrier can be found of sufficient strength to withstand the fatal effects of private passion and individual feeling. The system, therefore, of seeking redress for wrongs by the

sword, which so much prevailed during the middle ages, might, perhaps, but for the spirit of chivalry which accompanied it, have reduced the whole state of Europe into one great theatre of savage outrage. The martial character, the generous feeling, and the high sense of honour which were considered indispensable qualities in the profession of a Knight, not only served as a protection to the weak, but, in a very great degree, softened by their influence the rigour of the times, and prevented those dangers which threatened society at large from the universal practice of constant and domestic warfare.

A strict observance of the laws of chivalry, like those of honour in modern days, formed a part of the character of a gentleman, or one of birth and breeding. These laws were so early, and so forcibly impressed on the mind of youth, that they became, as it were, a bridle to regulate and curb the passions of the individual ; for that Knight was ever held recreant and base, the very scorn of his fellows, who, to satisfy a private resentment, or even a purpose of just in-

dignation, would attempt any thing that militated against the laws of his order.

The early and devoted attention, of such as were designed for knighthood, to the fair sex, served also to refine their manners, and to create a delicacy and benevolence of mind, that subdued the ferocious spirit which is generally found to exist in warlike and uncultivated society. With the young cavaliers, love preceded in its influence the actual existence of the feeling. It was a sentiment rather than a passion; they were taught even from childhood to consider it as a merit, inseparably connected with whatever was great or generous in the character of man, as the peculiar distinction of virtue.

The altar of love was that at whose pure shrine no incense must be offered but such as was worthy of its object, before whose flame whatever was noisome or unseemly perished, whose warmth whilst it glowed within the heart, and delighted the fancy, created, animated, inspired in the mind of its votaries great attempts and glorious achievements. This delicate com-

merce with the other sex, wholly free from libertinism, banished from its intercourse whatever was gross or unbecoming, and though each Knight, at a more advanced period, devoted his affections to some fair individual who became the mistress of his heart, and to whom he referred all his honours, yet a general reverence and admiration for the sex at large, was early cultivated in his bosom.

This feeling, whilst it was often recognised by the name of love, more frequently bore the character of friendship. It partook of its kindnesses and its confidence, without the alarms of violent emotion, and knew neither the watchful vigilance of suspicion, nor the tortures of jealousy. To the constancy of that friendship which subsists between men, it superadded a devoted zeal, and the refinements of polite manners. The very restraint which it possessed, arising from the difference of sexes, preserved the dignity of its character, by preventing its degenerating into rude familiarity.

In these ages, it is true, the notions of love were carried to such a height, that they ob-

tained, in after times, by way of expressing their extravagance, the title of *Romance*; but this very *romance of feeling*, however extravagant, although half ideal, became the standard of excellence, the mould, as it were, in which virtue endeavoured to model her own image, to induce an imitation of her finer beauties in those who copied from her. The more perfect the model proposed for the imitation of others, the nearer will that imitation arrive at excellence: like the painter, who copies the inimitable statues of antiquity, that he may give to his own delineations of common nature the refined and poetic grace of Grecian genius.

The profession of chivalry, during the middle ages, was universally considered the chief honour of all of noble blood, and many who had not the distinction of birth to confer dignity upon their name, eagerly sought, by following a profession so replete with danger, to acquire for themselves that renown they could not claim from ancestry. This martial spirit was encouraged by the chief nobility, for at a time when the courts of the feudal Barons frequently

rivalled both in splendour and in power those of kings themselves, it became a part of their policy, as well as of their magnificence, to attach to their own house a number of spirited and warlike retainers.

To further the accomplishment of this object, the courts of the barons and petty princes were always open for the reception of the children not only of such nobles as were deceased, or disabled by war, calamity or imprisonment, from protecting their offspring, but also of those of less elevated birth. In these courts the young persons received their military education, became attached to the service of their lord, and, finally, after having gone through the several grades of chivalry, were knighted by him, and called into the field: sometimes to make war upon a neighbouring Baron, sometimes to defend their own territories, and even occasionally to oppose their legitimate sovereign.

The youths thus trained to arms, were, during their infancy, committed to the charge of women; they were given over to the instruction of a governor, when they had arrived at their

eighth or ninth year, and at this period their military education commenced. They were accustomed to the chase, and to all athletic exercises. They were taught the manage of the war horse, and clad in a suit of armour adapted to their size and years, which was increased in bulk and weight as they grew older and stronger. They were made to practise in the lists the use of the lance and the sword. Their agility was put to the test, by making them vault into the saddle whilst their charger was at full career within the ring. They were obliged to equip both themselves and their horses at a few minutes' warning; to bear hardships, to endure fatigue, and to venture their lives in the pursuit of glory.

To such as were designed for a military life (and sometimes to others), the first situation assigned was that of page, a station, in its higher branches, of considerable honour; the meaner or body pages, as they were called, who were not designed to bear arms, being little else than family domestics. The page of the first order was taught to love his God, and to fear and

reverence the church with all her holy mysteries and superstitions ; and although this fear was sometimes lost in the after licence of a military career, yet a tincture of it generally accompanied the man through life.

The next great precept instilled into the bosom of the youth, was that of devotion to the fair sex, and he was made to select some beautiful and amiable lady in the court or castle, to whom his services were to be more peculiarly directed. It became his duty to attend upon her both in her public and her private hours of amusement ; to follow her to the chase, the ball, the banquet, and the church ; to bear her company in her journeys, carry her messages, and present to her the wine cup at the board.

These services were also occasionally rendered to the lord or the lady, by the pages who were thus especially devoted to some damsel of their train. The fair thus bestowed upon them, by their noble protectors, and the praises they received from her as the mistress of their youthful affections, often influenced the conduct of these boys throughout their after life. The former

made them faithful, and zealous in the discharge of their military duties, and the latter raised in them an emulation of spirit, a courteous and gallant bearing, alike ornamental to the knight either at the court, or in the field.

The liberal protection given by the nobles to youths who were sometimes either orphans, illegitimate, friendless, or wholly unprotected, not only proved a source of immediate benefit to the benefactors themselves, but raised a spirit of emulation in their children; whilst the ties of affection, thus early formed between the young persons, in the happy hours of open-minded infancy, in their future lives frequently became a bond of indissoluble friendship. So that the adopted page, and the son of his lord, when each had attained the honour of knighthood, were often brothers in arms: by this fraternal union, they were bound to espouse the cause, and become the mutual protectors, and abettors of each other.

The old romances speak often of these early and faithful attachments; and some honourable instances of them, have been mentioned by the

ancient chroniclers. In a few cases, the favours thus bestowed by the lord upon a favorite retainer, might plant in an ungenerous mind the seeds of jealousy, that ripened into malice in the bosom of a kinsman, or even of his own son. But such instances were rarely seen to be the consequence.

The next step to knighthood, on quitting the post of page, was that of becoming an esquire, whose office to attend upon the knight is generally known. There were also esquires devoted to the service of the lady of the castle, and her lord; and others who filled the place of chamberlains, to whose charge was committed the keeping of the jewels, the plate, and whatever was held most precious in the household. The highest post of this nature was that of body squire, who bore the pennon of the knight in action, and followed him in all his most perilous enterprises and adventures.

CHAPTER II.

THE PRIORY.

— Like one that stands upon a promontory
And spies a far-off shore, where he would tread :
Wishing his foot were equal with his eye,
And chides the sea that sunders him from thence ;
Saying—he'll lade it dry to have his way.

SHAKESPEARE.

THE Priory of St. Mary, towards whose walls, in the last chapter, we left the young page conducting the travellers, was situated on the borders of the extensive forest of Orthes, near the town of that name, then the capital of Bearn. It was a vast and magnificent pile of Gothic structure ; having large gardens within its boundary walls. These were thick, strong, and battlemented, calculated for defence in case of an attack from without, and flanked by many a ponderous tower. The state of society at this period rendered such fortifications necessary, even to the monks ; the sanctity of their re-

ligious life being insufficient to guard them from the pillage that generally followed the incursions, either of a neighbouring baron, or the assaults of the free bands, so common in this part of Europe.

The Monastery was beautifully situated in a romantic valley of the province, commanding a view of the town and castle of Orthes, its rich and fertile plains abounding with corn, flax, and vineyards. It was sheltered by the forest from the northern winds; and towards the south as far as the eye could extend, appeared this rich champaign, now glowing with the varied tints of summer, that gave an additional charm to its own natural character of beauty. Here and there, appeared a town or hamlet, glittering in the sunshine, like specks of silver, relieving by their contrast, the dark green colour of the masses of wood, formed by the fir tree, so common in this province.

The river Gave, that watered Bearn, stole, winding in its course, through these delicious valleys, and was seen, now of a light blue, then of a darker color, sparkling, or obscured, and

changing its appearance, as the passing cloud either threw a temporary shadow upon its clear and tranquil surface, or left it again in sunshine. At length the river seemed to dwindle into a narrow line, as it receded in the distance towards the foot of the lofty Pyrenees; whose tops, crowned with eternal snows, formed a striking contrast with the warm colours of the landscape, that glowed beneath their base.

Half way up appeared hung as it were in mid air many a strong castle; the extent of which, though the work of thousands of human hands, shrunk into nothing, when compared with the huge masses of rock, that varied by their projection, the somewhat regular declivity of these mountains. The foaming cataract (breaking loose as it were from the confines of its prison within the earth) came thundering down their sides, carrying, in its course, large portions of the rocks, and the strong and “gnarled oak” torn from its roots.

Near to the Monastery, stood, as we before mentioned, the great forest of Orthes; a spot which although it sometimes created alarm, by

affording a secure and temporary shelter to the free bands, or to the ambuscade, and skirmishing parties of a foe, yet in these days was more frequently the occasion of delight, by offering a range desirable to the hunter. It was here the Count de Foix (whose original Treatise upon Hunting and Hawking is still preserved in the royal library at Paris) often pursued his favorite sport, and it was here too, that the prior of the monastery in question, had built for himself a hunting seat, as a place of relaxation from the severer duties of his function.

The prior of the Monastery of St. Mary, Philip of Avignon (whose order was that of the Benedictines, called by way of pre-eminence the Holy Rule) was a man of extraordinary powers of mind, both natural, and acquired: and whose learning in the obscured state of literature of the period appeared almost supernatural, as a meteor of light in the midst of darkness. Of his birth no one knew the origin; but, by his name, he was generally understood to be of Avignon. From his skill in negotiation, and as an able conductor of court intrigue, he had been employed by the

pope to carry on some private affairs between his holiness, the King of Navarre, and several of the neighbouring barons. On like errands he had also been sent to De Foix: till the count, struck with his talents, felt desirous of exclusively possessing so able an instrument, and attached Philip to his own service, by creating him from a simple priest to be the prior of the Monastery of our Lady of Orthes.

That Clement should thus have suffered himself to be deprived of so useful an agent, surprised many; but the policy of courts, it is to be presumed, was oftentimes as mysterious in the fourteenth century, as in the present. And some did not scruple to whisper (when they were far from Avignon) that his holiness, although he valued the useful agency of Philip's abilities, yet thought the splendour of his tiara somewhat lessened by its serving as a glass to reflect the brilliancy of those talents, which he intended should help to guide, but not dazzle the eyes of his consistory. And others thought, perhaps with truth, that jealous, as it was known, even the Holy See itself was of the power of De Foix, it might be

found expedient, to suffer one of the pope's own creatures to be placed near the person of the Count, who might still act as a useful emissary for his holiness of Avignon.

Such were the whispers of the time, but true or false, Prior Philip heeded them not, nor was he so deeply concerned for the interests of any one, whether pope, king, or count, as for his own. He was one of those beings, who resolve to make all things subservient to their own immediate purpose; and his purpose was ambition. He had studied mankind, not for speculation but for profit: and his philosophical contemplation of his fellow creatures was bounded by the view of making them serviceable to himself.

Keen in observing each finer light and shade of the human character, he knew how to adapt both circumstances, and occasions, to the prevailing passion, or the humour of the individual he had to deal with; and whilst he resolved upon the accomplishment of some object that was to further his views, he artfully connected with his own hidden motive, some plausible interest of

the party concerned; and would frequently by letting fall a sentence, offering a remark, hinting a possibility, or dropping an insinuation, give rise to those very suggestions, he dared not openly avow; and which, by these means, appeared to the persons themselves the sole result of their own councils, whilst, in fact, they arose from the expert cunning of the monk.

A great observer of past actions, he was a cool calculator of future and remote possibilities; and, with him, when they concerned his own advancement, these were far from being of an humble nature. Great in his ambition, he disdained to fix it upon minor objects; yet, whilst the termination of his views was of a lofty character, he did not overlook the minute steps that must be passed, before the boundary of their summit could be attained.

Full therefore of plots for gaining a possible advantage: steady, patient, and persevering in execution; undaunted by mischance, and resolute in his purpose, Philip of Avignon, already enjoyed the day-dream of his greatness. And ever mindful that “lowness is young ambition’s

ladder," he had already, by its aid, climbed some of the slippery heights of fortune; and looked with a serious hope to the attainment of that summit of his desires, where he was ultimately to bind his ambitious brows with nothing less than the triple crown.

But like all projectors of vain and human ambition, if their object be great or small, he saw only, in the contemplation of his own projects, the fair side of the picture. Exalted by his opinion of his own powers, their energies turned what seemed almost impossible into probable. And whilst in his imagination Philip stept forward from prior to abbot, from abbot to bishop, from bishop to cardinal, and from cardinal to the deputy of heaven upon earth, the keeper of its sacred keys; whilst thus he revelled in the luxury of thought, and sometimes decorated this picture of himself, drawn by his fancy, with the red hat, or the purple robes of office, he was in fact, but walking the rounds of his own little territory, as prior of the Monastery of St. Mary of Orthes, dependent on the Count de Foix, and only hoping to gain advancement by the

cunning of intrigue, and the influence of money.

Of the power of the latter, Philip was by no means ignorant; and, next to that which had descended from the blessed St. Peter himself, he thought no key could so well bind, or unlock, the treasures most to be desired on earth as that of worldly gold. To possess such a key, was to be possessed of power in its most active form; yet for the present Philip viewed only its shadow, but longed to grasp the substance.

Plans, possibilities, and expectations kept alive his hopes; and whilst he calculated upon gaining advancement, or of rising on the death of another, there was one thing Prior Philip quite forgot—that he was himself *mortal*; and possibly before his views could be accomplished, might himself fill up that grave in which his calculations had already quietly interred others.

Upon the evening of that day on which we opened the first chapter, the prior was seated in his own apartment, engaged in making designs for some improvements in the church of his monastery, that were to be executed at the ex-

pense of De Foix; for amongst his other talents, Philip possessed that of an able architect. Indeed the most eminent persons of that class were then found within the seclusion of the monasteries. Philip sat attentively considering his subject, with the parchments before him, his pen in his hand, and various mathematical instruments scattered upon the table.

He was this evening dressed, not in his costly robes as prior, such as he wore on days of ceremony, but in the ordinary habit of the Benedictines. His gown was black, hanging below his feet, in ample folds; the sleeves were large and full; his mantle and cowl were also of a black colour. The sombre character of this attire, being only relieved by the white chin-cloth, or wimple, that fell as low as the bosom. His waist was girt round with a broad black belt, clasped with a gold buckle. A rosary depended from his side: and his only distinction as prior of the brotherhood, appeared by wearing about his neck a chain of gold, to which was attached a cross of the same metal; whilst his tunic

was fastened in front by a morse, or brooch, richly enamelled, in mosaic work, with precious stones, and representing the Virgin Mary.

The prior was of that age, when the countenance supplies by its fixed character, its gravity, and dignity of aspect, what it may have lost of the more captivating, but less imposing graces of youth; in which is seen the intelligence of experienced manhood, without the imbecility of old age. Philip was tall, and well-formed; and by an upright carriage, a graceful, yet reserved demeanour, there was something about him that forbade familiarity and created respect. So that his worst enemies, although they scrupled not to satisfy their spleen behind his back, felt too much awed by his presence to offer a personal insult, or to show contempt.

The general character of his aspect was that of tranquil contemplation; for he was one of those who possessed perfect self-command, and could timely check the outward expression of the inward workings of passion; so that it required no ordinary observer to know the real

state of his feelings, when he chose to dissemble them. His forehead was handsome, his eyes penetrating, and, but for an indescribable, yet certain expression they possessed, with a habit of looking, as it were askance, from out the corners of their half-closed lids, there was nothing striking in the character of his face, which would lead to a suspicion of that of his heart.

The prior was seated in a spacious chamber of the gothic edifice just described, which received its principal light from four high arched, and richly fretted windows; and at the east end of the room, within a recess, ascended by a few steps, appeared a beautiful oriel window of stained glass, enclosed by a tracery of the finest work. The ceiling was formed of carved oak, perforated in various elegant devices, and decorated at the termination of each arched beam, with a fantastic mixture of carved heads; some representing those of saints, and others, those of clowns or monsters.

An image of the Virgin carved in wood, and richly painted and gilt, stood within a niche above the door-way. The walls were hung with

sundry pictures, highly finished, in the hard style and severe outline of the gothic school; yet possessing, that nature, and simplicity, so characteristic of its works. Each saint introduced in these subjects appeared with a glory around the head, painted in leaf gold. The principal pictures represented the acts of the blessed St. Benedict, beginning with his birth at Spoleto in Italy, and bearing the date of that event, A. D. 480, beneath. His penance in the rocky wilderness was also depicted, and finally his death at his own monastery of Cassino.

The lower part of the chamber was hung with tapestry ingeniously worked by some neighbouring nuns; and represented the pious labours of the holy Albus, a monk of the Benedictine order, who first converted to Christianity the province of Gascony.

The chair in which Prior Philip was seated, was of a character suited to the house. It was carved in oak, and on its back, bore the twelve apostles. Two angels with spreading wings formed the arms; and singular to say, the whole weight of these holy personages, was supported

by four most incongruous legs; the two foremost representing a couple of gothic devils playing upon the violin, and the two hinder, as many clowns with their baubles in their hands. The table upon which the Prior leaned, was also of carved oak, but only its feet could be seen, as the top was covered by a cloth of woollen, whose various colors were woven into a representation of some church or monastery.

The meditations of the holy man, were interrupted by the entrance of a monk, John the Chronicler, whose name bespoke his office. Brother John softly raised the latch, and with a noiseless step stole into the room: where advancing a few paces he made a profound reverence to his superior but did not speak, as if fearful of disturbing his reverie, and awaited some word, or notice from the prior, to begin the conversation. The monk brought with him a roll of parchments, and an illuminated book*,

* At this period the Gothic MSS. were decorated in a magnificent style, and every figure introduced in their illuminations, whatever might be the date of their story, was seen dressed in the costume of the time of the illuminator; so that the heroes of Greece and Rome, a Leonidas, or a

upon the margin of whose pages, depicted with minute attention, appeared the subjects illustrative of the work, upon which the Chronicler had been engaged.

“Good even’, brother John,” said the Prior, putting down his pen, and slightly inclining his head, as he addressed the monk, “What have you there?”

“I have brought, holy father,” said the Chronicler, “the book I wrote at your desire, and which Walter the Illuminator has just finished, that it may be ready, as you directed, to present to the Count de Foix, at the festival of our Lady. I have brought also these parchments, which it has cost me much trouble to erase, and clear of their original matter, in order to make room for the homilies of the blessed St. Hildebert. The

Cæsar, appeared attired like knights, and esquires, adorned with the emblems of the Romish Church. These delineations were faithfully minute, carefully pencilled and decorated with the most brilliant colouring, intermixed with ultramarine, and richly embossed gold, in lavish profusion: the initial letter of each chapter, as well as the fancied ornaments surrounding its page, displaying that degree of lightness, taste, and elegance, so peculiar to the works of art of the middle ages.

matter of these writings was in the Latin tongue, composed by one Sir Titus Livy, a great heathen: knowing that after times would never think of him, whilst my chronicles would be read by the latest posterity, I have not scrupled to make Sir Titus give place to me in these parchments."

"Thou hast done well," said the Prior, "and hast shown the proper judgment of a chronicler. But is this all you bring me—nothing but a record of the dead, and no news of the living? Is my messenger returned whom I sent to gain private intelligence at Toulouse? are my letters gone to Avignon?"

"Thy messenger is not returned," replied John; "thy letters are on the road. But, for the certainty, that either the messenger, or the letters, will reach their destination in safety, no one can answer. The free bands are out again scouring the country far and near, and Basile le Mengeant of Lourde leads them to pillage every where save in Foix and Bearn; for there the lances of the Count keep the rogues at bay, and our good knights track their footsteps as the

blood-hound does the scent: but I have other news for you, holy father; the Lord Peter of Roussillon is dead."

"What!" exclaimed the Prior, "Peter of Roussillon dead!"

"It is even so," answered John, "he is no more, and I am to chronicle the acts of the late noble lord."

"Noble," said the prior, "he little merited that title, brother John."

"I speak it," replied the chronicler, "only in respect to his rank and state."

"A greater tyrant than the Lord of Roussillon never lived," said the Prior: "I have heard him boast, that he has often stormed a castle after breakfast, hanged the inhabitants, whilst he unlaced his corslet, and made the cooks roast his dinner by the embers of the burning pile: and for cold-blooded deeds he had not his equal; but he is now well rewarded, hell shall burn fiercer to receive him. Set him down in thy chronicle a villain. He never heeded the church. If a florin could have freed his father's soul from purgatory, he would not give it. If I had seen

him before he died, I would have threatened him with the terrors of the church. Had he left some of his ill got wealth to pious uses, it might have helped to ease his soul from the grievous burden of his sins. Who is his heir?"

" His son, Robert of Roussillon, is the heir," answered John; " but my news is not yet all told: the greater part of his wealth is bequeathed to this monastery."

" To this monastery!" exclaimed the astonished Prior.

" It is so, indeed," replied John, " for whilst the late lord was sick, brother Francis, of our house, chanced to be near him, and visited Roussillon out of Christian charity. He found the wretched sinner howling and calling upon God, in the last agonies of death; so Francis gave him pardon, and the unction, and the hopes of bliss, on the condition that he should apply his worldly substance to the holy uses of this house."

" Francis did his duty as a churchman," answered the Prior, " and though the sins of the Lord of Roussillon had been yet blacker than

they were, such pious acts of penitence would wash them out. The rewards of Paradise keep pace with our repentance. Roussillon is therefore now but the gainer even by his sins, and though his wealth was ill got, yet the foresight of Heaven, knowing that it would finally be applied to pious uses, allowed him the means of amassing it. The bounty of the late lord to this monastery must not be forgotten, Heaven is merciful, and teaches its charities to all men. Roussillon was penitent, let us not be hard upon him. Give him an honourable memory in thy chronicle, brother John. Let his piety be an example to other lords. But when are we to receive what has been thus worthily bequeathed to our house?"

"Ay, there is the point," said John, "for his son Robert vows we shall never touch a florin of the legacy. He most impiously pleads as his excuse, that when the late lord, at the desire of brother Francis, marked his cross upon the deed of gift (for Roussillon being no clerk was unable to write his name) it was even then void, as my lord at that time was frenzied by

the violence of the fever which caused his death. His son, therefore, swears, he will resist our just claims upon his father's land."

"Let him do so," replied the Prior: "I possess some interest at Avignon. He shall be outlawed and excommunicated as a robber who has pillaged the church. He shall be held so till every florin can be paid down upon the nail. The curses of his holiness shall fall upon his head."

"Roussillon will not heed that," said the chronicler: "he is such a hardened sinner, that I question whether he would not sell his holiness's blessing for a brace of florins. He says he will maintain his right, either by trial of battle, in the lists, or in the courts of my Lord de Foix."

"No," answered the Prior, "he shall do neither. We will instantly have him excommunicated, and his lands, without reserve, shall be seized upon for the benefit of the church. He shall not try his cause in 'armed lists.' We will meet him with the arms of heaven, with the thunders of Avignon. He shall not carry his cause before the Count de

Foix ; for although my lord is strict in observing his prayers and penances, he is no great friend to the church. His son, Sir Evan, would be a better instrument to support her rights. Evan shall be named as the successor of his father. The Count thinks he has paid my services with making me Prior of St. Mary ; and I am to wait his pleasure for a bishopric forsooth. But to our business ; the lands of Roussillon shall be seized upon for the church. His son may starve or die, as he lists. It is no matter what becomes of such a profligate ; and look, brother John, that you observe the directions I have given you respecting the memory of the late lord in your chronicle.”

“ I will,” replied the obsequious Monk.

“ And now we speak of chronicles,” said the Prior, “ I will give you, brother, a few precepts respecting history, that you may bear them in mind, as a light of direction through the difficult paths of human learning. History should be as a glass, where mankind may view the actions of past ages, reflected, clear, true, and perfect. Let wisdom, therefore, instruct you with her

counsels, take impartial justice as your rule, let truth guide the pen, and to the latest hour of time your works, as an historian, will delight, instruct, and amuse mankind."

Such was the speech of Prior Philip on the benefits of history; and lest our readers should think these latter instructions not quite consistent with the former ones respecting the Lord of Roussillon, or that the Prior designed to impose upon the chronicler by attempting to make himself appear what he was not, an impartial and upright man, we beg leave to say, it was no such thing. Prior Philip had not the least intention to impose on brother John. Both knew each other to be villains, and both acted in concert together. There was but this difference between them, that the former was the greater rogue from possessing the greater power to be such, that of stronger intellect.

Philip and John went on together like the head and the hands, as members of the same body; Philip contrived villanies, and John executed them. The one was superior in art and dissimulation, the other in low cunning. Each

had some private end to accomplish, and each found an interest in aiding the other. Philip held the pre-eminence wholly by the superiority of his talents, and John became the subservient tool by the inferiority of his abilities: like a rabble mob, who, though they may be all bad alike, yet follow some arch rogue that becomes their leader, simply by having more wit than the wretched creatures he misleads.

Thus, then, can we in no way account for Prior Philip's last speech, except by supposing (as dissimulation was a leading feature in his character), he had so long been accustomed to dissimulate in the presence of others, that, from mere habit, he now and then did so, even before his own minion. Philip, in truth, might be compared to certain actors on our modern stage, who have been so long accustomed to the airs and manners of assumed majesty, or the softness of artificial feeling, that, when off the stage, they still stalk about, or strut through the purlieus of the theatre, with all the grandeur they are wont to exhibit before its scenes.

At the conclusion of the last speech upon the

merits of history, Prior Philip walked towards the oriel window we have before noticed, against which the rain now loudly rattled. “ This is a dismal evening,” said the Prior, “ and so darkened by the gathering storm, that the colours of yon window can scarcely be distinguished. One word more, and you shall leave me, and order my lamp hither. Have you, brother John, made enquiry respecting the health of the old blind Bishop of Lescar? His diocese is within the gift of De Foix, and if any thing should happen to the reverend prelate, I might perhaps—but how fares he?”

“ Ill enough,” answered John: “ his friends despair of his life, unless some one could induce the great leech, Master William de Harsley, to come from Toulouse and give his help. He has refused to take the journey; but it is thought that as you did the Doctor a service, by bringing him to attend upon his holiness of Avignon, he might come at your entreaty, would you send one of our house to solicit him?”

“ I cannot,” said the Prior: “ it would be wrong to send away our people at this time,

when they should all be present at the festival of the blessed Virgin, the mother of God, to do honour to her day. And I doubt if it would be an act of charity to do so. The Bishop of Lescar is a worthy prelate, holy and zealous. To defer his passage to a better world, would be no charity. Nor let us delay that moment, when his darkened orbs of sight will be opened to look upon the glories of eternity. Still we will not be wanting in kindness to him, you shall visit him, brother John. The suffering and the good, ought not to perish by a painful, lingering death. You shall therefore take with you a mild narcotic, that I will prepare, and it shall help the worthy bishop to a gentle sleep in his last hours."

At this instant, whilst Philip was thus hinting his foul purpose to the monk, a loud peal of thunder burst upon their startled ear; and the painted window, which had before been obscured in total darkness, was suddenly lighted up, as the fires of Heaven flashed from the electric clouds, and illumined all its brilliant colors. Natural agency sometimes acts upon

the worst minds, when moral causes would fail in their effects. Thus Philip, who but a moment before, could in his contemplation of crime, defy the great Maker of all things, trembled beneath the creatures of his will, “the wind and storm fulfilling his word.” The flash which suddenly illuminated the glories of that window, before obscured in shade, now seemed, as the light of an offended and Almighty justice, to strike upon the Prior, and to tell him, that the shrouded darkness of the sinner’s ways, in the eye of Heaven, stand naked to its boundless view. Philip started, and turning to John, exclaimed, “Some other time, we will send the drug some other time.”

No sooner had he uttered these words, than the Warder’s horn was heard to blow, and the sound was speedily followed, by the noise occasioned by opening the heavy portal of the monastery. “See who is at the gates,” said Philip. The monk obeyed, and soon returned. “It is,” he informed the Prior, “Sir Espaign du Lyon. He comes to take shelter for the night; for, having ridden out from Orthes, he is overtaken by the

storm, and now craves the comfort of a bed, some pottage, and your own good company to pass away the time."

"Sir Espaign du Lyon, the foolish old prater," said the Prior. "He is always eraving some entertainment that may give him an occasion of gossip. However, bid him welcome. I will but retire to my oratory, it is the time for prayer. I will then return and greet the old courtier. Do you, brother John, order a mass to be said this night in the crypt of our church, for the repose of the soul of the late pious Lord of Rousillon. And let Gregory, the preaching Friar, say some homily upon the occasion. You may yourself, brother, stay to hear it, as we will dispense with your attendance for the remainder of the evening."

Brother John, whose taste for homilies, was exactly like that which, in our days, is attributed to the grocers' boys for figs, excused himself from this permission; and leaving the reverend Prior to his devotions in the oratory, he went to give orders about the mass, and then to seek the company of Sir Espaign du Lyon.

CHAPTER III.

THE SUPPER.

This fellow is wise enough to play the fool,
And to do that well, craves a kind of wit ;
He must observe their mood on whom he jests,
The quality of persons, and the time.

SHAKESPEARE.

WE must now return to our travellers, whom we left in the forest seeking their way to the Monastery of St. Mary of Orthes, guided thither by Will of the West. They soon reached its precincts, and, arrived without the gates, Agos de Guisfort blew his horn, and the warder appeared at a loop-hole, in one of the flanking towers of the draw-bridge. Upon hearing the purpose of the travellers, he descended, and opened the wicket, or small gate, by the side of the large arched entry, to admit the party to the court-yard within.

“ And pray, Master Warder,” said Agos, “ doth thy house admit only two legged animals, and not those who walk upon four? how dost thou think our horses can go through this wicket? Open speedily the great gates, and let them pass in.”

“ It is not our custom to do so after complin,” said the Warder.

“ Then here I stay,” rejoined Agos, “ for I would rather batter down this door, than leave my good horse to do penance before the gates of the best monastery in Christendom.”

The Warder after some hesitation complied, and the whole party entered within the court-yard of the priory, where, in consequence of the darkness of the evening, the travellers were prevented from distinguishing the beauty of the magnificent Gothic structure before them, of which we shall offer a brief sketch to the reader.

The priory and the great church of St. Mary’s were of that fine order of florid Gothic architecture, peculiar to the period on which we treat; neither the times that passed before, nor those of a later date, having produced any thing that

can be compared with it. The buildings of the priory were not all of the same era, yet its general character was light, rich, and elegant: a style that may be termed midway, between the plain and early gothic, and the innovation it experienced by the introduction of the compound arch and trefoiled windows of the fifteenth century. Nothing could exceed the magnificence of the façade of the church, or that of its great portal.

Above the door-way stood, in a richly fretted niche, the figure of the Virgin Mary, holding the infant Saviour in her arms, sculptured with that graceful simplicity and delicate feeling which characterized the works of the artists of this period. Immediately above these figures was seen a round or wheel window, of vast dimensions, glowing with the thousand dyes of its beautiful stained glass. Beyond the window, covering the whole façade of the building, and placed within niches of the most exquisite workmanship, were seen the statues of the twelve Apostles, and sundry barons and knights, the latter in armour, with their lances in their hands.

These had gained their elevated posts by the persons they represented having, during their lifetime, contributed towards the erection of the church.

In the compartment around the Virgin and Child, appeared various quatrefoil ornaments. Within each of these was introduced an exquisitely carved groupe of figures, representing some subject from the Holy Scriptures; so that it might literally be said, there was not a stone in the front of this magnificent pile but appeared covered with the finest carving.

The four Evangelists, larger than life, each bearing an appropriate emblem, stood two on either side the outer entrance of the portal, and the other two in like manner within, at the termination of the flight of steps before the doorway.

On either side the portal arose a high tower, whose ornaments, and pointed windows, fretted and carved into a thousand beautiful and fantastic forms (no two of them alike), presented to the spectator such a combination of elegance, fancy, and magnificence, that the whole looked like the work of fairy hands, and the eye wandered on

from one object to another in wonder and delight. The whole front of the building was finished at the top by a light and elegant range of battlements, formed of open work: and they might be compared, for beautiful variety and delicately fine forms, to the icicles as they hang and glitter in a frosty morning upon the leafless boughs of the trees. Yet (singular contrast) with that fanciful incongruity of the gothic ages, carved heads were here and there introduced to decorate a key-stone, to ornament the capital of a column, or to range along the flutings of an arch, these images representing monsters or clowns, the latter surmounted with the cap and bells of folly: and two double-headed chimeras, far extending their necks beyond the building, spouted from their mouths the water that fell above upon the roof.

Before this portal, within the court-yard, stood an octagonal cross, with niches on each of its sides, bearing within their several recesses the figure of a saint or martyr. Upon the top appeared the Redeemer of mankind, nailed to the cross; the Virgin and the favourite disciple were

seen on either side, with clasped hands and elevated looks, expressive of sorrow mingled with hope. Immediately below them stood St. Benedict, with his right hand upraised (two fingers being extended, whilst the rest were bent), in the act of bestowing the benediction. At the foot of this cross, the pure water of a cool fountain played from out the huge jaws of a gothic lion. And entering within a second gateway that led to another court, appeared the range of cloisters, surrounding the square on every side, and vying in magnificence of structure with the rest of the building.

The Knight, his Esquire, the Franciscan, and the Page, were ushered into the common hall, where they staid whilst a lay brother, who acted as warder, went to announce their arrival to the Prior. During his absence, Sir Equitan had an opportunity of observing, by the light of the torches that burnt in the hall, the person of his young guide, Will of the West.

The boy appeared to be about fourteen years old; he was a handsome and a well-grown youth, with an open countenance, and a complexion,

whose clear white was rendered more brilliant by the contrast it derived from the glowing effusion of red that overspread his cheeks. His eyes were blue, and possessed an animated expression of sense and feeling. His mouth (a feature in the human countenance that generally affords a certain indication of the temper of the individual) possessed peculiar sweetness. The lips were full, and of the deepest carnation, whilst a smile, that had become habitual, played round them, and was ever ready to attend upon the feelings of affection, mirth, or good will, that filled the warm heart of the young page. His hair was of the palest brown, and curled in rich profusion about his head.

Should our readers feel desirous of viewing the portrait of this interesting youth, we think they might be referred to the royal library of Paris, where it is probable it may be seen in the illuminated MS. treatise upon Hawking and Hunting composed by the Count de Foix.

We fancy William there appears, amongst the pages of the Count, dressed after the fashion of the times, *mi-parti*, with the right leg of his

pantaloons (or stocking that reached from the hip to the foot) of a deep blue colour, and the left leg of a bright scarlet. Upon his feet are seen the long-toed solerette, or pointed shoe (peculiar to the fourteenth century), fastened across the instep by a thong of leather. He wears in this portrait a green jerkin or coat, that falls half way down the thigh, with full sleeves of the same colour, finishing at the elbow, and falling over a tight under-sleeve of scarlet. A black belt, intermixed with white, is slung across his shoulders, and a short dagger depends from the left side. Upon his head he wears a blue, close cap, ornamented round the border, and finished with a sharp point in the centre, that falls over the forehead. Above the point appears a single jewel, from which arise a couple of white ostrich feathers, gracefully drooping towards the back of the head.

The dress in which William thus appears, was the general habit of the pages and varlets of the fourteenth century, sometimes varying in colour or in its minuter parts, according to the taste of the lord to whose service they belonged.

The party was soon admitted into the presence of the Prior, who was taking a cup of wine with Sir Espaign du Lyon, and brother John, in the apartment before noticed. Philip received his guests with courtesy: for all the religious houses of the order of St. Benedict were especially bound to entertain pilgrims and travellers of every description. The Prior arose and noticed each person as he came into the room.

“ You are most welcome, fair knight,” he said as he spoke to Sir Equitan, “ welcome to such entertainment as this poor monastery affords.”

“ Peace be unto this house !” exclaimed the Franciscan as he slowly passed in, the words with which all the brothers of his order saluted the habitation where they entered to receive hospitality.

“ Peace be unto the house,” re-echoed Agos who followed the friar, “ but war be upon its pantry. For never before this night did I so long to commence an attack upon the whole race of fish, flesh, and fowl. Good even’ to you, holy father; we will crave your blessing, and a short

grace, for we are sore put to it for wherewithal to comfort and support the creature."

"Silence, Agos," said Sir Equitan. "I crave, holy Prior, the rights of hospitality: for I am a stranger to these parts, and purpose on the morrow to seek the Count de Foix. I have travelled far in obedience to my vow, which binds me never to return to my own inheritance till I have broken a lance in every famous court of this kingdom, where the lists are free, and there are valiant knights. And hearing the Lord de Foix holds a festival in honour of the Virgin, I am come to try my fortunes in the tournament of Orthes."

"The court of De Foix is already thronged by noble strangers," replied the Prior, "and your purpose, fair Knight, suits your years, and your profession. This gay Esquire I take to be your attendant: he is welcome. My young Page too, we are old acquaintance. How do you, William? When did you leave Orthes, and how fares the noble Count, and the ladies of his court?"

“They are all well,” replied the page; “the Lady Jane of Boulogne, and Isabel de Greilly, are employed in working a robe to be presented to the Virgin at her assumption. And the old Countess de la Karasse is busy in moulding a wax leg, which she means to offer, with her prayers, at the shrine of our lady, to beg the Virgin will in pity accept the offering and the prayers together, in the hope that her own leg may find some ease; for the Countess de la Karasse is sorely troubled with the gout.”

“She had better offer,” said Agos, “the rich meats of stewed nightingales, stuffed peacocks, and the bucks’ fat, round haunches, that have helped to bring it on: they would make her prayers of some avail to her disease. I know how your old court dames feed.”

“May a blessing be upon her work!” said the Prior, not heeding the free remarks of Agos; and turning to the Knight, he once more bid him welcome. “Go, brother John,” continued Philip, “tell the Pantler to bring some refreshments to this chamber; it is past the hour of refection: here our guests shall sup, for the

blessed St. Benedict hath taught us that hospitality should be ready at all hours to make the stranger welcome."

Whilst these preparations were making for the supper, the party, excepting the Franciscan, entered into familiar discourse. Indeed the wandering monk seemed to take little interest in what was passing, but had retired somewhat apart from the rest of the company, and appeared attentively viewing Sir Equitan. In the course of the conversation it was noticed, that Sir Espaign du Lyon, had for many years been attached to the service of the Count de Foix, and that there was not afeat of arms done within the provinces of Foix and Bearn, but he could give a minute account of the transaction.

The desire of Sir Espaign to do so, soon became evident, and he seemed to possess no ordinary share of curiosity in learning the business of other people. In fine he was, what Prior Philip had termed him, a great prater, and, like all praters, was anxious to collect matter as fuel for his intelligence. We take this opportunity of stating that the Sir Espaign du Lyon here in-

roduced to the acquaintance of the reader, is the same respectable and amusing old knight, who so much delighted with his long stories, that venerable chronicler, Sir John Froissart, whilst they rode together from Tarbes, to the court of the noble Count de Foix.

Sir Espaign du Lyon was a well looking man, about sixty years old, with a certain martial air, that showed he had been in his youth as much accustomed to the field, as he now was to the court. He was dressed in a black velvet jerkin, trimmed with a fine fur, called minever, and a scarlet suit beneath; over his shoulders appeared a rich mantle of scarlet; a massive chain of gold hung round his neck. Upon his head he wore a *tippet*, or hood of black velvet, which was ornamented with a chaplet of pearls. The splendid girdle that bound his waist, supported a beautiful belt, that crossed the hips, and by which the sword was suspended; the last was of polished steel, and finely enamelled at the hilt.

Supper was at length served, when the genial kindness inspired by the sight of a good meal,

upon which every hungry member of a company is about to regale, seemed to possess the whole party, and the Franciscan no longer keeping in the back-ground, took his seat next to Agos at the board.

“ Prithee,” said the jovial squire, turning towards him, “ tell me, holy Franciscan, art thou not vowed to hold a life of pains and mortifications?”

“ It is our duty to observe such a life,” replied the friar.

“ Why, then,” said Agos, “ bid thy supper be of one mind with thy journey, for as thou wouldest not ride my horse, to save thy legs the toil of travel, it were surely better to fast, and so mortify and keep down thy stomach’s pride: at least thou wilt eat but trencher bread, and wilkyn, or perhaps a little senage?”

“ No,” answered the friar, “ I will eat flesh; for the brothers of St. Francis may partake of any thing that is set before them, as wayfarers and wanderers are wont to do.”

“ A wise rule, by my faith,” said Agos, “ for one who journeys to the banquet of a prince:

and as thou likest good meat, it will not taste the worse, to join to thy mess a cup of good wine; come, friar, wilt thou drink?"

"No," replied the Francisean, "wine is an enemy to wit, I will taste only water."

"Well then," cried Agos, "brother John will pledge us in the cup, and with him too I will also taste this venison pasty."

"I will pledge thee in the cup," replied the Chronieler, "but I must not taste the pasty."

"The rule of the blessed St. Benedict," said the Prior, "somewhat differs from that of St. Francis; we are allowed to eat no flesh."

"No flesh that is four-legged, you mean," cried Agos; "for brother John seems making good a siege upon yon capon."

"It is even so," answered John; "the fowls of the air, having but two legs, it is therefore thought the good St. Benedict did not intend to prohibit them our use, under the name of *flesh*. All creatures being two-legged are consequently allowed to our order."

"Well," exclaimed Agos, "of all wisdom, give me that of holy church, which ean ex-

pound all human difficulties, and rather than want a loop-hole to creep out at, will confound too, the very plainest things. Henceforth I will set it down in my memory that fowls and fish are of one genus, and so a fast day shall always be with me one of feasting. Come, brother John, fill up another cup; this wine is your right true liquor; it warms the heart, and sparkles in the cup, giving joyous moments, like the bright eyes of a fair-haired Norman wench."

"What knowest thou of Norman wenches, Agos?" said Sir Equitan, smiling at the gay humour of his Esquire.

"You are not then from Normandy?" observed Sir Espaign du Lyon, glad to have an opportunity of putting in a word of enquiry, as he addressed the Knight.

"No," replied Sir Equitan.

"Perhaps of Bretagne, then?" continued the enquirer.

"No," was again the answer.

"Or it may be of Burgundy, or Hainault?" resumed Sir Espaign.

"Of neither," said the Knight.

“ England, perhaps?”

“ No,” replied Sir Equitan, “ I am a Frenchman.”

“ France is a large kingdom, having many provinces,” observed the courtier.

“ It hath,” said Sir Equitan.

“ Ay, and with many inquisitive old knights in them too,” retorted Agos.

“ One of your state and gallant bearing,” continued the inflexible Sir Espaign, without heeding the Squire, and thinking by the use of a little adroit flattery to gain some intelligence, “ one of your state and gallant bearing must be of noble blood, and proud no doubt to boast his lineage, and the honour of his native province.”

“ The glory of our lineage,” said Sir Equitan, “ can do no honour to ourselves, unless, like a glass, we reflect the rays that form it: and as for the province of a Frenchman, it should be wherever he can serve his prince.”

“ A most noble answer,” exclaimed Sir Espaign. “ I pledge you, to your success in arms, gentle knight, and I am much mistaken, if that gallant spirit has not made captive some fair lady’s affec-

tions. I would drink to her health too, if I knew her name; but we shall learn it. We shall find you out at the tournament, unless you will join me and drink to her now."

Sir Equitan held the cup to his lips, bowed to Sir Espaign du Lyon, and drank off the contents without speaking.

"Pray, old Sir Knight," said Agos, addressing the courtier, "dost thou ever angle?"

"Ah! marry do I," replied Sir Espaign; "I sometimes follow that sport in the river Gave."

"Why then," continued Agos, "when you have been sitting upon its banks, with your little hazel wand in your hand, did you never observe, whilst you bobbed it, and jerked it above the stream, that though you now and then hooked a young fish, that hardly feels his fins, yet the sly old trout, as cunning as the fisher, and used to his tricks, just nibbles at the bait, but keeping quite clear of the hook, sports awhile, and passes down the stream in safety. A lesson that all keen fishers may remember."

The conversation was here interrupted by the entrance of the Sacrist, who came to speak with

the Prior respecting some orders he had given for the decoration of the church on the 15th of August, the day of the assumption of the Virgin Mary. The Sacrist, after receiving some further orders, was thus questioned by the Prior.

“ Is the church hung with the tapestry * as I directed? Is the feretrum † in proper order? Are the chalices all burnished? And are all the ampuls‡ taken from their cases and arranged as I desired? Has the door of the tabernacle§ been painted?”

“ All is done as you directed, holy father,” said the Sacrist, “ and brother Walter, the illuminator, is now painting the new right door

* It was customary to hang the churches with some piece of tapestry on the days of festivals.

† The Feretrum, or bier, was generally constructed of gold or silver, richly worked, with divers Catholic emblems. Feretria were used for carrying the host.

‡ The Ampulæ held chrism, or such reliques as were best preserved in a phial. They were generally of crystal.

§ The tabernacle was often made of ivory, standing upon four feet, with two leaves, or folding doors, painted both within and without. It was used to hold the cup (which contained the host) at the high altar.

of the tabernacle, for the old one was quite off its hinges."

" And what subject is he painting upon the new one?" enquired the Prior.

" Truly that of the broiling of the blessed St. Lawrence upon burning coals," said the Sacrist.

" Good," replied the Prior.

" Good," re-echoed Agos, " holiness hath a strange acception of terms. Now for my own part, who confess that the flesh upon my bones bath no great longing after martyrdom, were I to find the way to heaven, by the grillings and roastings of my body, I should think it more like the fiery road to Satan's habitation, than the path to paradise."

" The death of the blessed St. Lawrence was not a voluntary act of his own," observed the Prior, " he was made to suffer for the faith by heathens."

" Voluntary ! no, in faith," cried Agos, " for neither saint nor sinner, if he be not a madman, or a fool, could have much taste for such warm trials of his bodily constitution, and must know well enough that to broil his own bones, can

neither give pleasure nor do honour to the power that made him."

The monks all looked aghast, and shrugged up their shoulders as if they felt a mingled sensation of wonder and horror, at the heresies thus freely expressed by the licentious squire. The truth was, Agos de Guisfort was somewhat of a free-thinker for his day, never friendly to the monks, nor to the superstitions of their church, and being now rather warmed by copious draughts of wine, he forgot the respect that was due to his entertainers. However, they deigned not to notice this last speech, and the Prior continued his interrogatories to the Sacrist.

"What have you done with the ampuls taken from the great chamber?" said he.

"That," replied the Sacrist, "having in it a precious tooth of the good St. Cecily, I put on the altar-table, by the side of a piece of the true cross; and the scull of St. Gregory near the jaw-bones of the eleven thousand Virgins, in the chapel of the great aisle."

"Art thou sure, brother Sacrist," said Agos, "that they are but the jaw-bones of those eleven

thousand Virgins? for, on my faith, should but the smallest part of their tongues remain in them, who knows but that the restless spirits of their original proprietors may work a miracle, and set them talking? and should they do so, St. Gregory will stand no chance at all; for if the tongue of one woman will often defy priestcraft to lay it quiet, those of eleven thousand would set at naught the Pope himself, and all the church to boot."

" Do not profane holy things with such unhallowed jests," said the Franciscan sternly.

" So, so," cried Agos, " you will have no jesting made about these damsels. But you are right, it suits your craft; a friar is never more grave, than when any of womankind are in the case, for then be sure he is plotting mischief, and looking more towards earth than heaven."

" We never look at womankind," said the Franciscan, " but with the eyes of holiness, either in pity to them, as the daughters of sinful Eve, or with brotherly love, to give them, on the confession of their sins, the absolution of the church."

“ I will wager you ten florins,” replied Agos, “ and put down your gold, that from your own words, I will prove, you speak any thing but sooth, for if you look upon them as the daughters of Eve, or take their confession, the very communication of their evil deeds, shall corrupt the sanctity of your thoughts; and as for brotherly love——”

“ Peace,” said the Franciscan, “ thou hast drunk much wine, and I have tasted none. I will not therefore cope with thee in words. But talk not thus, of thy idle wagers; for know the brothers of St. Francis are not allowed even to touch the smallest coin of money, be it gold, silver, or any other metal.”

“ Neither to heed women, nor drink wine, nor touch gold?” cried Agos, “ then may the brothers of St. Francis dispense with all their mortifications, for in this world they can have no pleasures. And as for sin, they may bid defiance to the evil one in his own person, and throw down the gage, for if they withstand such baits, nothing can possibly assault them with temptation.”

The Sacrist again addressed himself to the

Prior. "Some repair," he said, "must be done to the Pyx* that holds the chain with which St. Catherine bound the devil. And the true rod of Moses has lost the tail of the golden serpent stuck at the end of it."

Agos, made bold by wine, heeded not the presence of the holy men, and again interrupted them, exclaiming, "Why then, brother Sacrist, prithee repair the pyx by one of the links of that same chain, and St. Catherine will soon find another to supply its place; for if a woman once bind the evil one to her service, she will form link after link in the forge of sin, rather than let him loose again; and as for the defect in the other relic that thou speakest of, why repair it with the tail of Satan himself, which cannot be out of place, when it is made to supply that of the serpent."

"Where is Martin of Bigorre?" inquired the Prior. "Truly," said the Sacrist, "he is busy in making a crown for the blessed Virgin,

* A Pyx, though generally appropriated to the host, sometimes contained reliques. The two extraordinary ones here mentioned were highly valued by the Roman Catholic Church.

as brother Francis is in moulding a new wax head for her image ; and her left arm too wants repair, for it is in such a broken condition, that it will not bear the ropes with which she is to be taken up above the rood-loft at her assumption. The child held by her right arm will do well, as we have bound it on tight, and dressed it in a new suit of clothes, made after the fashion of a page. The Virgin's *gîte* too, and her petticoats, are new, and Walter, the illuminator, who has a fine hand at devicees, has painted them over with the souls in purgatory, and the blessed St. Dunstan taking the devil by the nose."

Agos was again about to offer some profane jest, when a frown from the Prior, and the commands of his master, effectually silenced the gay humoured and now somewhat light headed Squire.

The Sacrist was dismissed, and the discourse presently took a more serious turn relating to the affairs of Foix and Bearn.

Here Sir Espaign du Lyon was quite at home, and told, with some eagerness, all he really knew concerning them ; but still wishing

to appear the great man of a great man, like many other courtiers, he, by various half sentences, shrugs, and significant nods of the head, now and then timely introduced, with a mysterious and important air, implied that he knew more than he chose to make public.

“ Pray, Sir Espaign du Lyon,” said the Prior, “ is not the truce between the Count de Foix, and the Lord of Armagnac, almost expired ?”

“ It is,” replied the ancient Knight.

“ And what are the Count’s intentions ?” inquired the Prior, “ does he mean speedily to renew the war on his own quarrel, or upon that of the Lady Jane of Boulogne, to regain the inheritance of his fair ward ?”

Sir Espaign gave a significant nod of the head, saying, in reply, “ The Count’s measures are well considered ; he is a wise Prince, ever prudent in council, and secret in his resolves, undertaking nothing lightly, and cautious in reposing his confidence ; placing it alone in the bosom of such persons as may, by their wisdom and experience, help him with wholesome advice.

There are some knights in whom the Count trusts, who must not speak too freely, and who may know more than it would be expedient to communicate. But it may be the Count may possibly renew the war, or he may defer his present measures till he sees what steps the Duke de Berry will take with his rebellious people at Toulouse, for there is mortal enmity between my Lord de Foix and the Duke."

"Upon my faith," said Agos, "we have learnt just as much from your intelligence, as we could have gained by consulting one of those carved monsters' heads, that grin upon us from this ceiling, placed there, I suppose, for the benefit of these holy brothers, for they being like nothing either in heaven or earth, the monks might fall down and worship them, and never break the canon. Why I could give more certain intelligence than you have told, Sir Knight. The people of Toulouse are quiet enough now, and the gay old Duke de Berry is amongst them, cursing my Lord de Foix for his late interference, and drinking the good citizens' healths

in Languedocian wine, with a fair word and a hearty kiss for every pretty damsel whom he meets. There is no rebellion now, but the Duke vows vengeance on the Count. Yet one good act he has done him, that of keeping the head of Basile le Mengeant of Lourde upon his shoulders; for the sly rogue was taken in one of his own traps, and the citizens of Toulouze would have had off his head but for the Duke, who interfered, and got off both le Mengeant and his fellow captain, John de Bearn, for a ransom, and so sent them back again to their own horde of wolves, whose den is in the strong castle of Lourde, that they might be of some use, and make the Knights of Foix and Bearn keep their lances bright, for Basile le Mengeant is too good a Captain to let his free bands howl within their own den for want of seeking their prey; he will give your knights some skirmishing, I warrant. As to my Lord of Armagnac, I believe he is as great a thief as the rest of them, and that is all I know about the matter."

“ Has the Lord of Armagnac long been at war with the Count de Foix ?” inquired Sir Equitan.

“ Yes,” said Sir Espaign, “ it is an ancient quarrel between their houses, and now rendered more inveterate by a second cause of strife, a quarrel which my Lord de Foix has taken up on account of the Lady Jane of Boulogne.”

“ And what will be done on the expiration of this truce ?” again inquired Sir Equitan.

Sir Espaign du Lyon, again looked mysterious, and was beginning with “ *It may be,*” when Will of the West, who sat opposite to him, exclaimed, “ Dear me, Sir Espaign, every body knows my Lord de Foix intends to make war upon the Armagnacs, as soon as the truce expires, on behalf of my beauteous mistress, the Lady Jane, to recover her inheritance of Comminges, which John of Armagnac unlawfully withholds from her. And I wondered to hear the holy Prior Philip ask you concerning it, as you both know all about the matter ; and many say, that the reverend Prior is so often with my

Lord de Foix in private, that the Count heeds his counsels more than he does yours."

Sir Espaign felt much offended at this artless speech of the young Page; and drawing himself back in his chair, he extended both his hands upon the arms of it, and looked with a contemptuous frown upon the Page; just as an old mastiff, sitting quietly on the ground, extends his fore paws, and looks surlily upon some little cur which stands in front teasing him by his yelping.

"Peace, varlet," said the offended Knight, "state matters are no subjects for the tongues of boys to prate upon."

"Is my Lord de Foix," inquired Sir Equitau, "well provided with knights, and men at arms?"

"No prince in Europe better," said Sir Espaign; "and as you seem a stranger to these parts, we will fill out another cup of wine, and then I will tell you all about the matter."

The wine was filled out, and the travellers settling themselves in their seats, the more con-

veniently to look at the narrator, they each assumed an attentive air, whilst old Sir Espaign put on one of importance; and after clearing his voice with another cup of wine, he hemmed thrice, and thus began: “ You know——”

“ We know nothing yet,” said Agos.

“ Do not interrupt me,” replied Sir Espaign. “ You must know, then, that about a century ago, there was a noble count of Bearn, whose name was Gaston, a great lord, and a valiant man at arms: you may see his effigy of brass in the church of the Friars Minor in Orthes, where he was interred, having caused this effigy of himself to be made during his lifetime*; in it he appears dressed in his armour, the limbs in the effigy giving a very exact resemblance of the gigantic size of his own, for he was one of the largest and the strongest men of his day.”

“ You have now interrupted yourself,” said Agos, “ for what has the effigy of Sir Gaston de Bearn to do with your story?”

* This was a common practice. See a paper upon the subject of Effigies, written by the late Charles A. Stothard, F.S.A. and inserted in the *Memoirs of his Life*, page 22.

“ You must know then,” continued Sir Espaign, “ this Sir Gaston de Bearn had two beautiful daughters. The eldest he gave in marriage to a lord of Armagnac, and her sister to a Count de Foix, nephew to the king of Arragon, whose royal arms, paly or, and gules, are still borne by the house of De Foix. Now it chanced that Sir Gaston de Bearn was at war with the king of Castile, who entered Bearn with his army, resolving to over-run and destroy the country. Sir Gaston collected his men at arms, and sent to his two sons-in-law, desiring their assistance; and that they would bring into the field all their knights, squires, and varlets, well horsed and armed. The Count de Foix instantly obeyed the summons; but the lord of Armagnac, instead of doing the same, only sent a herald bearing letters of excuse to his father-in-law. I will now give you an account of the battle.”

“ We can dispense with that part of the story,” said Agos, “ we have seen too many battles to need to hear the fashion of them.”

“ Well then,” continued Sir Espaign, “ Sir

Gaston de Bearn was much angered at the conduct of his son-in-law, the lord of Armagnac, so he and the Count de Foix resolved to lead their men into the field, and without farther assistance to give battle to the king of Castile. They did so, and the victory was achieved by the valour and address of the Count de Foix, who pursued his foes as far as Biscay. The king was nearly taken prisoner, and only escaped by seeking shelter in an abbey, where he dressed himself in the habit of a monk. The Castilians were completely defeated, and Sir Gaston de Bearn, on his return to the castle of Orthes, summoned all his people to attend him in the great hall, where, embracing the gallant De Foix, he publicly declared that he not only bestowed upon him the lands of Foix, but, after his own death, those of Bearn, which he had intended to bequeath to the lord of Armagnac, as the portion of his eldest daughter, now forfeited by this base desertion of her lord in time of need. The knights and varlets all promised fealty to the Count de Foix, as the heir of Sir Gaston de Bearn. But no sooner was the latter dead, than

the lord of Armagnac laid claim to the lands of Bearn, and thus began a war, which has been handed down from father to son, between the two houses of Foix and Armagnac, and exists to the present day."

" You told us also, valiant Sir Espaign du Lyon," said Sir Equitan, " that there was a second cause of quarrel between the present representatives of their houses."

" That is what I am now about to relate to you," replied Sir Espaign, " and pray be very attentive to each particular, for they are all of importance. You must know then that Eleanor of Comminges, a kinswoman to the present Lord de Foix, married John Count of Boulogne, in the hope that he would by force of arms regain for her the lands of Comminges, which had been unlawfully seized by the present lord of Armagnac. But the Count of Boulogne loved pleasure more than battle, and staid quietly at home: a thing which so enraged his wife, that she left him for ever, to live with her own friends in Arragon. She brought away with her their only child, Jane: and soon after this separation (for

it happened some years since), the Lady Eleanor came to the court of the present Count de Foix, and committed to his protection her only child, then an infant girl, and implored him to give her shelter at Orthes, and guard her from the wicked designs of the lord of Armagnac, who had seized upon Comminges, the lands to which this daughter was the rightful heir. She was desirous to place her with the Count, because she knew he was so powerful that he could protect her child, as she feared Armagnac would carry her off, and thus keep quiet possession of what he had so unlawfully gained. The Count received the fair child, Jane of Boulogne, with every mark of kindness; and promised her mother (who is now dead), that he would not only bring her up as his own daughter, but at a proper time would endeavour to regain for her the possession of her lands.

“ The first part of this promise has been strictly observed; but the wars and enterprises in which the Count has been engaged for some years, have hitherto delayed his intentions re-

specting the lands ; but it may be he will shortly take up arms to do Jane of Boulogne right."

" Arms can never be wanting, nor knights to bear them, in so righteous a cause as that of the Lady Jane," said Sir Equitan. " Her beauty and her worth is spoken of by every knight who has visited the castle of Orthes. It is when espousing such a cause a member of our order feels the value of that profession, which gives him the power to assert the rights of innocence and beauty with the strength of his arm, and the valour of his heart ; it is the exercise of its functions in such a quarrel which gives to chivalry the honourable pre-eminence it holds beyond all other professions in the world."

" Save that of the church," said the Prior : " the ministry, like the attributes of Heaven, can be second to none."

" The attributes of Heaven," replied Sir Equitan, " are those of justice and of mercy ; and such as dispense them, impartially, become its ministers. Thus the knight who wields the sword of justice in the field to chastise the foes of vir-

tue, yet shows mercy to the fallen and the vanquished, imitates by his charity the divine Origin of Good."

"I am very willing to allow, sir knight," said the Prior, "the benefits of the profession of arms, since carnal wars must be carried on whilst sinful men exist. But I never can allow chivalry to compare her worldly toils with the labours of spiritual contest and heavenly discipline."

"I am no churchman," replied Sir Equitan, "and perhaps know something more of the tilting-lance than of the mass-book, yet I am a christian (here the young knight devoutly crossed himself, and bowed his head to the image of the Virgin that stood above the door); and I have ever thought some active craft, which enabled me, like the Samaritan, who helped his brother at his need, to rescue the miserable and to support the just, was the best way to show my faith in the revealed law of Heaven. The discipline of the world is more severe than that of the cloister; and the task of subduing our own passions in the midst of temptation, requires more virtue than can be exercised in a solitude, where there is

little chance of their being assailed. Yet I see not why religion and chivalry may not go hand in hand together, like members of the same body. The church should have the voice of Heaven to issue its mandates, and chivalry be as her arm to execute her behests."

"It is true," said the Prior, "but our profession, as superior to yours must be allowed, even in a worldly view."

"I shall hardly admit that," replied Sir Equitan.

"Consider," continued Philip (and he took up the illuminated manuscript brother John had brought to him), "consider that to the church, as a body, we are indebted for the preservation of literature. When Europe was overrun by the horde of the ferocious nations of the North, Learning had no friend. Persecuted and affrighted, like the dove of Noah, she could no where find rest for the sole of her foot, save on the palm-branch that grows about the peaceful dwelling of the monk. The barbarous northern nations, accustomed to some practice of devotion, though heathenish and abominable from these uses, still

brought with them one spark of better feeling: So that whilst they razed to the ground the palaces of princes, and the castles of the barons, they often spared the walls of the monastery, and the humble cell of the recluse, impressed by some faint shadow of respect for those who were devoted to the service of the invisible world: thus, whilst the gold of princes was torn from their possessors with carnage and execration, the poor monk, with the more precious treasures of his parchments, his manuscripts, and his poverty, was suffered to be at peace."

The Prior paused for a moment, and thus continued,—“ Even in our enlightened times, when the improved state of society in the fourteenth century has dispelled the night of ignorance and barbarity, learning still finds her refuge within the walls of the monastery, else would chivalry and the din of arms fright her from the world: and learning, which teaches us to understand and to value the arts of peace, is of greater benefit to mankind, than the study of arms, that leads to its destruction. Arms may be necessary to humble barbarity, but learning, if widely dif-

fused, would extirpate the existence of them. And after all, Sir Equitan, you knights, who live but on the breath of your exploits, you could not yourselves chronicle them, for the best of you are but sorry clerks ; and were it not for the solitude, the pen, and the learning of the monk, after-times would view no more traces of your honourable deeds, than one can of the goodly vessel that swiftly passes through the waters, agitating their current, and furrowing their clear bosom ; but almost as swiftly as she makes her way, the waters close again, and settle into their former smoothness. Thus you see arms must ever be the debtor of learning ; and Charity, too, stands at the monastic door, with wide-spread arms, to welcome to her bosom every child of want."

Such were the words of the Prior, and long did he and Sir Equitan continue to discuss the merits of their several professions, till the great bell of the priory told twelve. Father Philip then said he must retire to rest, as the brothers of St. Benedict arose at two o'clock in the morning for prayers and meditations, and did not afterwards repose.

During this long discussion, the Franciscan took no part in it, but seemed absorbed in his own thoughts. Brother John did little more than give his assent to the opinion of the Prior, as the echo follows the sound. Agos de Guisfort, and Will of the West, had both fallen asleep, and Sir Espaign du Lyon was nodding. The dormitor was now summoned to conduct the travellers to the dormitory, or common sleeping-room of the guests, where we shall leave them to their repose, and turn to what will be found in the next chapter.

CHAPTER IV.

THE COURT.

His years but young, but his experience old,
His head unmellowed, but his judgment ripe,
And in a word (for far behind his worth
Come all the praises that I now bestow)
He is complete in feature, and in mind,
With all good grace, to grace a gentleman.

SHAKESPEARE.

THE castle of Gaston Phœbus Count de Foix, was situated near the town of Orthes. It stood upon the summit of a beautiful eminence, gentle in its ascent, but rocky, bold, and abrupt, in that part of the elevation which overhung the river Gave. Above these latter declivities the eminence was clothed with the finest woods, the vivid greens and deep recesses which formed a pleasing contrast with the gray hues of the noble and extensive castle, whose towers crowned their summit, and rose above their tops. The castle, like most residences of the feudal princes, was not

only calculated for defence, but also for magnificence ; it contained the palace, and the state of the Count de Foix.

The outward walls were flanked by above thirty massive towers within their enclosure ; upon the highest mound of earth stood the donjon, or keep, a work of great antiquity ; it seemed to look dark and sternly upon the buildings beneath, like the founder and the guardian of their race. The portal, or chief entrance, was flanked by two round towers on either side, in the impenetrable walls of which were seen divers small windows and loop-holes for the archers. Above this gateway was suspended a brazen helmet, to denote to travellers, that the Count de Foix dispensed the rights of hospitality to all knights and squires who might chance to enter his territory. This arched gateway, and the smaller one, or *wicket*, by its side, was richly decked with carvings in stone, as were also the windows above : a style of architecture that prevailed at this period, and of which many interesting specimens still exist.

The courtyard within, or outer Ballium, was

surrounded by buildings for the use of the men at arms ; and, passing through a second entry, also flanked by towers, the eye was at once presented with the whole range of that part of the structure which formed the palace of the Count, appropriated to his state*. This palace contained nealy two hundred apartments, beside the Baron's hall, that occupied the whole lower range of the south front. Towards the east arose a magnificent chapel, decorated with carvings, and the windows filled with stained glass. Within its walls, the ashes of many a member of the house of De Foix reposed, beneath their brazen or marble effigies.

The lower apartments of the palace were entered by various arched doorways, each surmounted with the arms of the Count, and his alliances carved in stone. In front of the second tier of windows was seen a light and elegant balcony, or rather communicating gallery, that led from one window to another. At the back part of this range of buildings, but still within

* The word *state* is here used in its old acceptation, that of the retinue of a prince.

the walls of the castle, was the garden of the palace, decorated with statues, fountains, parterres of flowers and alcoves. A winding path in the garden led to a postern door in the castle walls, which opened upon the woods that overhung the Gave.

It is in an apartment of this palace, (where the Count de Foix usually gave audience to strangers, or to the members of his household,) that we shall introduce him to our readers, and as it is possible they may not all be familiar with the domestic customs of the period of our history, it will not here be amiss to describe the Chamber of Audience.

It was lofty and spacious, lighted by six large arched windows that overlooked the garden, and commanded a view of the country as far as the eye could range, where the blue distance was finished by the bold outline of the Pyrenees, that often looked against the setting sun, like a flat mass of purple upon a ground of brightest gold. The chamber was hung with Venetian tapestry, representing the siege of Troy, and the acts of Achilles and Hector. A

mirror, also of Venetian manufacture, and at that time considered of almost inestimable value, hung facing the entry of the apartment. The floor was inlaid with coloured marbles, and strewed with fresh rushes, whose green and cool appearance was considered a luxury during the summer heats.

The most beautiful flowers of the season, placed in vases of chased silver, decorated the room. The chair of state was of carved ivory, inlaid with gold. Behind it arose a high back, which supported a canopy, the whole formed of crimson velvet, fringed and embroidered with gold. Opposite the chair of state stood a *luffet*, a piece of magnificence then in general use, which, according as it was constructed, denoted the rank of its owner. It was formed of finely carved oak, the back part, nearly half the height of the room, was finished by a rich canopy, with pinnacles at the top, that projected beyond the three rows of shelves beneath. These shelves, covered with napkins of white silk, and silver tissue, bore upon them ewers, basins, vases, flagons, and cups of the finest chased gold and

silver, with two *comfit boxes* *, (or spice boxes) each of pure gold, and set with jewels. The *three* shelves of the buffet denoted that the rank of de Foix was that of a *county* or earl. The dukes of the blood royal were entitled to four shelves to their buffets, and the king alone to five.

A table, covered with cloth of gold, and supported by large chased silver feet, stood opposite the chair. Around the apartment were divers couches, each finished with a canopy and pinnacles (to correspond with the buffet), and covered with a piece of purple velvet, embroidered with gold, that trained upon the ground. At the east end of this apartment, a door opened into an oratory, that joined the private room of the Count de Foix. This he never quitted till after the hour of noon, when he usually entered the Chamber of Audience.

Upon the morning following the day we have before noticed, several members of the court at

* These *comfit boxes* are described by the chroniclers of the period, as pieces of state peculiar to kings, princes, and earls.

Orthes were assembled to receive the Count at his accustomed hour. The principal persons in attendance were the Lord of Corasse, Sir Evan and Sir Gracien de Foix (the two latter being illegitimate sons of the Count), a youth named Eustace the Adopted, the Lady Jane of Boulogne, and de Foix's own niece, the lovely Lady Isabel de Greilly, with the old Countess de la Karasse. These were already standing about the chair of state, in the expectation that, in a few minutes, the door of the oratory would open to usher in their lord ; and we cannot here resist pausing awhile, to take a slight view of some of these noble personages, whose names are not unfrequently mentioned in the annals of the fourteenth century.

Sir Evan and Sir Gracien de Foix, were both handsome young men : the former had much of the dignity of his father in his countenance and mien, but blended with an air of more than common pride ; there was something in Evan which created respect, but forbade to love him. Both these youths were magnificently attired, in the habit of the period. Sir Evan wore a tight dress,

that reached from the hip to the foot, of pale blue silk, and above it the coat or vest sat close to the body, and fell half way down the thigh. This vest was formed of crimson brocade, embroidered with gold, and fastened down the front with a row of brooches, like buttons, composed of precious stones. The throat was bare, and the mantle, about the shoulders, of pale blue velvet, hung nearly as low as the feet, the border being scalloped, and crossing the breast, this mantle was fastened down the right shoulder by a row of four *fermails*, or clasps, of jewels. Upon his head, Sir Evan wore a circle or fillet of fine pearls, and a belt elegantly wrought in gold, and set with jewels, was girt about his hips. The shoes, that reached as high as the instep, were of embroidered velvet *.

Eustace the Adopted, who stood by the side of Sir Evan, was something younger than either of the Count's sons; he was of a comely person, tall, and well formed; his countenance, which ex-

* For an example of the style of dress here described, see the effigy of William of Hatfield, in Stothard's "Monumental Effigies of Great Britain."

hibited the graces of manly beauty (yet scarcely in its prime), though it was occasionally lit up with the fire of a young and martial spirit, generally expressed the fixed character and the dejected look of a thoughtful and melancholy temper.

The lady Jane of Boulogne, appeared in a dress of white silk, that fell in graceful folds below her feet; her sleeves, of the same material, were long and tight, and fastened from the wrist to the elbow with jewels. The upper part of her dress and the waist was confined by a *Cote-Hardie* * of green velvet, trimmed with ermine; it reached just above the bosom, and the robe or mantle was fastened to either side by a *fermail* of jewels placed in front near the shoulders, whilst the Cote-Hardie was clasped down the breast by diamonds. Her fine brown hair, parted at the back of the head, was bound into two long tresses or plaits, that hung down the back; and

* The Cote-Hardie was a summer dress with the ladies towards the latter part of the 14th century. See remarks on ancient costume by the late C. A. Stothard, in the "Memoirs" of his life.

around her brows, she wore a circle of emeralds, intermixed with natural flowers. A light scarf of silver tissue, that occasionally served the purpose of a veil, was thrown carelessly about her neck. This attire was well calculated to display to advantage her graceful person; and she reminds us so much of Chaucer's beautiful description of Emilie, that we trust the reader will pardon its insertion.

Her yellow heere was broided in a tresse,
Behind her back, a yerde long I gesse;
And in the garden, as the sonne up riste,
She romid up and down, and as she liste
She gatherith flouris, party white and rede,
To make a sotill garland for her hede
And as an aungel hevynly she song.

In the person of Jane of Boulogne, there was that union of grace and majesty, which is calculated to inspire a feeling of reverence with admiration. Her eyes were blue, and possessed both sweetness and expression. Her cheek perhaps had a little too much in it of the lily, but when animated by feeling, or glowing from exercise, it emulated the vermeil of the rose; or it might be compared to the delicacy of a fleecy

cloud, when it is just tinged with the crimson light of the opening day.

Isabel de Greilly, though inferior to Jane in the perfection of beauty, yet possessed all that it is capable of achieving,—fascination. Her stature was somewhat below the middle height, yet so graceful was her form, so light and airy every motion, such sweetness of disposition, and such a glow of health and vivacity of spirit, played in her eyes, and animated every feature, that she seemed like the creature of a visionary world, and still possessed, as it were, the simplicity and playful spirit of a child, with the wit and intelligence of riper years. Her dress was of the fashion of the lady Jane's, and the arms of her house were embroidered upon her gown and mantle.

The door of the oratory at length opened, and the Count de Foix, attended by the esquires and chamberlains of his state, entered the hall of audience, and took his seat beneath the canopy. The Count was of a noble and majestic person; he was bareheaded, and attired in a long Dalmatic of purple velvet, embroidered with gold,

that fell below his feet. His mantle, of the finest scarlet cloth, was trimmed with ermine, and upon the front part which crossed the breast, as well as upon the back, were seen worked in pearls, the arms and bearings of his house.

The Count graciously saluted the company, and after some general conversation, and remarks upon the coming festival, the tournaments and the knights who were to combat, he thus addressed the auditory : “ The festival we are about to hold in honour of the blessed Virgin, is full of import, for at that time, upon the expiration of the truce, I have resolved to take up arms, to do the noble lady Jane of Boulogne right, and to wrest from the lord of Armagnac her lands, which he unlawfully possesses. My proclamation will be issued at the tournament, that all such knights as are desirous of gaining honour, and their lady’s favour, may take up arms, to subdue tyranny, and to restore to the lawful heir the lands of Comminges. Prudence will be necessary in the conduct of our affairs, as I find the garrison of Lourde, under pretext of bearing arms for England, in the right

of Aquitaine, are now pillaging the country, and making prisoner, for the sake of ransom, every unfortunate baron, knight, or churchman, who may chance to fall within their power. And it is whispered that the lord of Armagnac, by means of their leaders, John de Bearn, and Basile le Mengeant, is even now tampering with the free bands of Lourde, to purchase their assistance against us in the war we are about to wage. Their emissaries are abroad, and wandering through the country, to learn our strength, and how our castles stand defended."

At the conclusion of this address, Sir Evan de Foix advanced, and making his obeisance to the Count, "My gracious lord and father," he said, "Sir Espaign du Lyon waits without, accompanied by Philip of Avignon, and a stranger knight, who comes to try his fortunes in the tournament."

"Give them entrance," replied the Count, "and do you, my lord of Corasse, and Sir Evan de Foix, conduct them hither." The Count was obeyed, and after they had quitted the chamber to marshal in the strangers, the ladies Jane and

Isabel advanced towards their lord, and kneeling at his feet, the former begged a boon. The Count bid her arise, saying she could scarcely ask what he would deny.

“ My request, my lord,” replied Jane, “ is but a simple one; it is to beg your gracious leave, that after the festival of the Virgin, myself, and the lady Isabel, may have permission to make a pilgrimage to the shrine of the blessed St. Ann, beyond the Forest of Orthes; where by prayer and penance, we may hope to gain her intercession at the throne of Heaven, to obtain success to our cause. There can be no danger in our travel, for the good saint, and the reliquie I wear next to my heart, will protect us; and were it otherwise, the lowly guise, and the poverty of a palmer, would be our security: they are things too mean to attract the eye of avarice; even the free bands of Lourde, dared they venture nigh to Orthes, would offer no let to such a holy purpose.”

“ Your prayer is granted, Jane of Boulogne,” said the Count; “ but here comes Sir Evan, and the Prior, with strangers in their company.”

The door of the chamber of audience was

thrown back, whilst Evan de Foix, and the Lord of Corasse, ushered in the party we left at the monastery in the conclusion of our last chapter. The usual compliments passed between the Count and each individual, when Sir Equitan having stated his purpose for visiting Orthes in much the same terms he formerly did to the Prior, the Count de Foix requested him to tell his name and lineage.

“ My lord,” said the knight, “ I am of noble blood; my name is Equitan; but till the purpose of my vow is accomplished, I may not add to it another. I combat for fame, and for the honour of beauty: for the present, therefore, I must be alone recognised by that title which best suits my occasion—Sir Equitan, Poursuivant d’Amour.”

“ Be it so,” replied the Count; “ such titles and such vows are common with the young gallants of France, who pay their worship at the shrine of love with more devotion than to any other saints. Your bearing, Sir Poursuivant d’Amour, is the herald of your good name, and I shall need no other caution for your merit: once more you are welcome. Proclamation of the tournament

has been already made ; and as you purpose entering the lists, you must this day, according to custom, hang up your shield and helmet in the church of the Monastery of the Friars Minor in Orthes : Sir Espaign will guide you thither."

" That I will most gladly," replied the ancient knight : " a brave display of arms is there already ; and those of this stranger, I doubt not, will be an honourable addition to their number."

" And now," continued the Count de Foix, " I will in this presence make known my farther purpose. Come forward, Eustace. This youth, Sir Equitan, (though he is dear to me as my own blood) is mine but by adoption. It is now seventeen years since he was first brought to this castle, he was then but two years old. I have educated him as my own child, and he has repaid my love with a true and loyal affection. For the last year he has been the esquire of my own person, and valiantly has he acquitted himself of that duty. Now, though, according to the laws of chivalry, no person, but by the special favour of an earl, can receive knighthood before he has attained the age of twenty-

one years; yet in consideration of this youth's worth, I purpose granting it to him, and will abate the two remaining years of his minority. He shall receive the honour of knighthood at this festival, so that by the prowess of his arm he may endeavour to deserve his spurs in the tournament. Eustace, you will keep the vigil of arms in the church of the Friars Minor. And may Heaven and the Virgin prosper you in all honour as a valiant knight!"

Eustace threw himself upon his knees before the Count, and for some moments was so overcome by strong emotion as to be unable to speak. At length he exclaimed, "My gracious lord—you who are more to me than a father, how shall the poor Eustace, the child of want and misery, who but for your kindness must have perished, how shall he thank you? I have a heart—I can feel, but words are made for small occasions, they are weak and powerless now. When such noble bounty should give utterance to the warmest feelings, I cannot speak mine. The misfortunes of my birth, which to some may seem my disgrace and shame, shall be to

me the occasion of an honest pride. For never can my necessities be named, but your bounty must bear them company. Oh ! my dear lord, may He who is the father of the fatherless, who shed the dew of his blessing upon my orphan head; and has bound about your brows the golden circle, may he ever guard and protect you, and give me a heart faithful and true to you !”

“ Enough, enough,” said the Count, and turning aside he wiped away a tear as it started into his eyes. “ Your own virtue, Eustace, is sufficient apology for the misfortunes of your birth. You are second to none in my affections, and in all things you shall ever find me, indeed a father.”

“ My lord,” said Sir Evan de Foix, as he advanced towards the Count, “ may I be bold enough to tell you that the favour you are now about to grant to Eustace will, I fear, give occasion for discontent to many of your household. You have those about your person, who have as faithfully served you; who are eager to buckle on the spurs of knighthood, and to show their valour

in arms. Thus stands the fresh and hungry falcon on the perch, that longs to spread abroad her wings, and from the vault of Heaven, to dart upon her prey. Do not then, I beseech you, give any cause for discontent amongst your state. At such a time we need all hearts ready and willing to oppose the Lord of Armagnac. The favour you now grant to Eustace was denied to my brother and myself: why should it be conferred on one unknown, who can claim neither name, nor arms, but such as you may please to give him?"

The Count, whose passions were easily roused to anger, looked sternly upon his son, and exclaimed in a voice of more than ordinary authority, "Evan, Evan, darest thou this to me? and in this presence too? Have not all my people justice at my hand? of what then can they complain? If I favour the youth of my adoption, yet do them no wrong, what doth it concern them? Suppose I will that Eustace should be second to myself in Orthes, who dare claim it as their right? far less the creation of a simple knight bachelor before the ordinary time. But

know it is my *will* to do so, and who shall question it? The will of De Foix was never questioned twice even by the boldest knight. Look well then to yourself."

" My lord," said Philip of Avignon, " suffer me to plead this young man's excuse. He is your son, his speech is somewhat rash, yet it is his zeal to serve the righteous cause that makes him speak without consideration for himself. And you must pardon a lover, who from his devotion to the Lady Jane of Boulogne, feels thus alive to every danger which may affect her interest; for her sake he would content all parties, that no jealousies may stir up strife amongst your people, lest they should fall off from her cause. It is you, my lord, who have fanned this infant passion into a flame, you have sanctioned Sir Evan's hopes, you must therefore pardon the vain alarms that follow the regards of a suitor."

" It is indeed true," replied the Count, somewhat softened in his manner by the apology of the Prior, " I have destined for Sir Evan de Foix the highest prize of valour, the hand of the Lady Jane of Boulogne—may he deserve it!

And for you, my fair niece, Isabel de Greilly, after we have regained the lands of Comminges for the Lady Jane, it is my intention that she shall not go singly to offer up her vows at the nuptial altar. For you, Isabel, shall bear her company with my second son, Sir Gracien, as your lord and husband. You know your late father's will, you must marry by my direction, or forfeit your inheritance to me. Or should you be perverse, and take the veil, then your gold is given to the Priory of St. Mary of Orthes, where Father Philip may consecrate it to any holy use."

"Whatever be the destiny of the lady," said Philip, "may heaven guide her choice, and inspire her with good thoughts to observe her obedience to the Count de Foix."

"My obedience," replied Isabel, "I fear will be of little value to heaven, and of less to my lord, unless it proceeds from a willing mind. But my desires rest satisfied in their present freedom. I desire not the state of a married lady, and I have less inclination for the cell of a nun."

The Count smiled incredulously at Isabel's reply, and turning to her fair companion, he said, " You, Jane of Boulogne, are silent. You have spoken no voucher for your obedience."

" My lord," replied Jane, " I am under your controul, my voucher for obedience is not necessary. Yet I own the recovery of my inheritance would afford me more joy could I have hoped to gain something of the freedom as well as of the consequence of power. Should Sir Evan de Foix recover for me my lands, he will be entitled to my gratitude; but should he seek the payment of the obligation by my hand, it is you, my lord, he must thank for it, as you will give him what I have no power to bestow, for my hand would never freely sunder itself from my heart."

The Count frowned, and Sir Evan de Foix though he spoke not, yet his cheek turned pale, and his lip quivered with passion. Sir Equitan, who for some time had stood gazing in mute attention upon the fine countenance of the beautiful Jane, seemed at once to enter into the feelings of her mind, and almost by an invo-

luntary impulse, he exclaimed, “ The spirit of a true knight would never enforce such a payment for any debt of gratitude, and it would spurn the base thought which could lead him to accept that guerdon the heart refused to bestow. To combat in the cause of virtue and of beauty gives its own reward, such are the sentiments of every true knight, and such must be those of Sir Evan de Foix. To you, Lady Jane of Boulogne,” (continued Sir Equitain, whilst he gracefully dropt upon his knee before her) “ to you, and to your cause, I consecrate my sword, my knighthood, and my honour. Deign, I beseech you, fair lady, to accept my service, and give me some token of your favour, that I may bear it about with me; it shall be the dearest pennon that ever knight bore, and the sight of a token will add strength to my arm, and valour to my heart. It shall wave from my crest in the day of battle, as the beacon to guide my followers’ steps to honour and renown.”

The Lady Jane blushed, and, with an air of modest dignity, she took from her shoulders the scarf of silver tissue, and presenting it to

the kneeling Knight, she said, “Thanks, Sir Equitan, I accept your service; take this as the token, and remember that the prayers and gratitude of her who gave it must be for ever yours.”

Sir Equitan pressed the scarf to his lips, and bound it round his shoulders. The Count betrayed no emotion of surprise or of displeasure, as such acts of gallantry were common in the days of chivalry; but Sir Evan de Foix, whose countenance during this scene had alternately varied with the emotions of anger, could no longer keep silence.

“That scarf, Lady Jane,” he exclaimed, “should have been mine, and should not thus lightly have been bestowed upon a stranger. I have long dedicated my sword to your service, and as I purposed to combat in the tournament for the honour of your beauty, I would have craved it at your hand. But it is bestowed. However, though it may for a while wave above the crest of this proud stranger, still it shall be mine, if fortune and my firm resolves keep pace. I, therefore, in this presence, throw down my

glove in gage of battle, to meet you, Sir Equitan, Poursuivant d'Amour, in the open lists. I challenge you to three courses with the lance, three with the battle axe, and as many with the dagger. And that white scarf, which you have forestalled from me, which then shall wave like a gay streamer, I will pluck from off your helm, to place it upon my own."

Sir Evan de Foix threw down his gage of battle, and, with an air of proud disdain, retired some paces from the company.

"I accept the challenge," said Sir Equitan, calmly. "Agos, take up the glove; and learn this, Sir Evan de Foix, that before you pluck from me this lady's scarf (whose colour figures the pure spirit of her who bestowed it upon me), we must change its hue from that of *white to red*, for never shall you wrest it from me, till it is steeped in the heart's blood of him who owns it now."

"My Lord de Foix, have we your permission that this wager of battle may go forward; may we be delivered of our vows in the expected tournament?"

“ You have my permission,” replied the Count; “ I will not be your hindrance. You are welcome, both of you, to show your valour in arms. But I would counsel you, Sir Equitan, to be more careful henceforth how you interfere in those concerns, that in no way affect yourself.”

“ Alas,” exclaimed the Franciscan, who had hitherto remained silent, attentively observing all that had passed, “ how apt is the spirit of youth to take offence ! Oh, gentle knights, is it thus you waste, in vain brawls about a simple maiden’s token, that martial courage which should lead you both to higher and to more useful deeds of arms ? When the holy sepulchre of Christ is profaned by infidels, when christians are suffering by the dreadful schism of the church, and our holy father, Clement of Avignon, is threatened by the false pontiff, Urban of Rome, were it not better to put your lances in the rest, for the cause of heaven, than to wage a bloody combat for a lady’s scarf ? Oh man ! vain man ! when wilt thou learn wisdom ?”

“ Your calling, holy Franciscan,” observed

the Count, “ gives the licence of freedom to your tongue. As a minister of the church you counsel well ; but know that young gallants delight in deeds of danger, as a beadsman doth in the penance that mortifies his spirit. Farewell, my friends, farewell, Sir Equitan, till the hour of the banquet, when I shall look to meet you in the castle hall.”

The Count retired, and Sir Espaign du Lyon, fearful of another brawl, reminded Sir Equitan of observing the ceremony of hanging up his shield. They soon after left the castle to accomplish this purpose in the church of the Friars Minor, the rest of the company dispersed, and Philip of Avignon, and Sir Evan de Foix, at length found themselves alone in the Chamber of Audience. Evan closed the door, and, pacing the apartment with hasty steps, seemed agitated by contending passions.

“ So,” cried he to Philip, “ I am beset every way with torments ; it is not enough that the beggarly boy of a common peasant, or, perhaps, of one even of a lower degree, should rise to knighthood, honour, favour with the Count ; that

he should eclipse me in the good report of the world; but that this stranger, this Sir Equitan, or Sir Nobody, must come and rival me in my tenderest hope, the favour of the Lady Jane of Boulogne. Did you mark how she gave the scarf to him; there was more in it than a common token: I could read a very cunning meaning in the gift; it seemed to say, 'Take me and my lands, they will scarcely stand for asking.' Did you observe her eye, her cheek? it blushed the conscious truth. Oh woman! woman! if all deceits were but pent up in one form, they would be in that of thine. Thy heart is as light as the vane which is perched on the house top, following every new gust that blows; thy will is more wanton than that of the fantastic ape, which can devise nothing but mischief; and thy temper, like water, will shine bright, and run smooth, till it turns with the tide, and swallows up all within the vortex of its angry current. I could almost find it in my soul to hate the Lady Jane, to pay her scorn with scorn. But I am sworn to her cause; her wealth too will give me power, and add to my

strength in obtaining the end of all my hopes, that of succeeding to my father in his titles and authority, as if I were born the legitimate heir of De Foix. And this proud knight too, if it were but to anger him and bring down his haughty spirit, I would win her. When she is my wife she shall sue to me—the time may come when I will claim her, as the falcon doth the affrighted bird that she holds within her grasp."

The Prior, who had allowed Sir Evan de Foix thus to give vent to his impassioned feelings, was now about to speak; but ere he could do so, Evan again burst forth in a tone of bitter invective.

"But this Eustace," he said, "I fear him, Prior; indeed I fear him; so besotted is my father with affection for the boy, that he is to Eustace, like the swoln cloud to the earth, that does nothing but drop 'fatness' to enrich it. Eustace, Eustace will supplant me, and be my ruin with the Count, unless we prevent it. Remember, Prior, my word is given; once let me be the lord of Jane of Boulogne and her lands of Comminges, and *thou* art bishop of its

dioeese, for the see is still vacant by this schism concerning the true pope, and then a cardinal's red hat will come as easy to thy head as to thy hopes. But prithee counsel me ; what can we do ? Let no thought slumber that may assist us in this extremity, for thy hopes rest on mine."

" I know it," replied Philip ; " but that hasty temper which masters your reason, is more your own enemy than the colour of the times. You did wrong to question the Count's purpose respecting Eustace ; let him be made a knight ; let him go on ; I tell you he will be his own ruin with your father, and I will help it."

" Tell me," exclaimed Evan, " I beseech you tell me by what means ?"

" Not yet, not yet," replied the Prior ; " you are too hasty : did I trust you now with all my purpose, your haste would mar it. But, for the present, to satisfy you, learn this ; that there is not an act of any import done within this castle, but *I* know it ; nay more, I know the very spirit, almost the secret thoughts of every one who lives within its walls."

“ How,” exclaimed Evan, “ hast *thou* too a *familiar?*”

“ No matter,” said the Prior, “ what are my means, if they effect their purpose; there are those who can awake the powers of hell to do them service.”

Evan shuddered; for although insensible to the moral precepts of religion, he was tremblingly alive to all the superstitious credulity of the times.

“ I have many means,” continued Philip: “ I have familiars of the flesh too, that breathe the air of heaven like you and me. John the chronicler, and myself, are both confessors to the chief members of this house; and thus the very simple maids will sometimes whisper, what it were better to conceal. And as to Eustace, I tell you, that I know his very soul: when a boy he was placed under my care, to make a churchman of him; he was apt enough in becoming a clerk, but he loved not a monk’s cowl, and so he returned to the Count; but, accustomed to my authority, he still looks up to me with

reverence and awe ; yet he never loved me : natures so opposite feel no love for each other."

" If it is so," observed Sir Evan de Foix, " he will never trust you ; how can you then work upon his mind ?"

" You know nothing of mankind," replied Philip ; " Eustace is full of soft effeminate affections ; and then he is as simple and as unsuspecting as the novice in her cell ; yet hasty, and of quick feelings, easily hurt, but equally forgiving. In short he is made up of tears and honesty, fit for nothing but his own ruin, and what in this world will ever make him play the fool. Have no fears of him ; leave me to deal with him, and he shall either venture upon some mad exploit in this war with my Lord of Armagnac, that shall cost him his life, or he shall ruin himself with the Count, as occasion may best serve. I spare him now, till all is ripe for action ; you shall know more hereafter."

" Ay," said Evan, " but this Sir Equitan—there is more in his assumed title of Poursuivant d'Amour, than he would fain have us think. I shall have my eye upon him ; and do you set

brother John to work ; let him employ some engine to find out who he is. But Jane of Boulogne, what power can work upon *her* will ? There I am lost again."

" Fear not," replied the Prior, " a woman is made up of contradictions, and may be played upon as easily as we touch the viol, or the rebec ; it is but finding out the master key, and every chord will vibrate to the sound. With woman the master key is vanity : why, she will weep to see a bird caught in a trap, yet sit with calm composure to look upon the bloody lists, when they are holden in honour of her beauty. Women are but the pastimes of an idle hour, or, like the household cat, useful and necessary. But that Jane of Boulogne has wealth (which I would aim to win, if I were not a churchman), I could despise you for loving her, and for being angered by a girl, a very garden plant, tall and white, like a lily."

" No," said Sir Evan de Foix, " you mistake my nature ; I was not formed to be the slave of woman's beauty. True it is that such perfection of female loveliness as shines forth in the

lady Jane, I never yet beheld; and she has stirred up in my soul some warm and thrilling hopes, that will not let me calmly resign her to another: this I confess; but think not I can play the whining lover; I cannot weep, and sue, and watch her fancy, nor wait the suit of time to gain a return of her affections: I can but woo her after a soldier's fashion, with my sword in hand, and claim her by the right of conquest. So she be mine, and her lands to boot, I care not by what means."

" Hold you to that," replied the Prior, " and if all else fail, I will give her to you. She will not be the first maiden whom force has wedded to her lord. Remember Mary of Hungary; would Henry de Blancquefort, thinkest thou, ever have been crowned king, had he been nice as to the means of gaining the heiress of a throne? But I must leave you. Where shall we meet again? You will be at the banquet?"

" Yes," said Evan, thoughtfully; " and before that hour, I will seek the lady Jane of Boulogne."

" Remember," continued Philip, " to calm that

hasty spirit. Passion is a tyrant, who will pluck reason from her seat, and ruin all her empire. Leave hot and testy feelings for those the world call honest, who act as they feel, and devise nothing; but for men who would watch the temper of the times, to turn them into profit, who calculate the consequence of every act before it is set on foot, they must hold the even course of a cool tempered judgment. Remember this; and so farewell.”

CHAPTER V.

THE INQUIRY.

I had a thing to say—but let it go.
The sun is in the heavens, and the proud day,
Attended with the pleasures of the world,
Is all too wanton and too full of gawds
To give me audience.

SHAKESPEARE.

“IN truth,” said Sir Espaign du Lyon (as he rode by the side of Sir Equitan to the monastery of the Friars Minor) “there was something very mad-brained in Sir Evan de Foix, to throw down his gauntlet upon so small an occasion as that of the lady Jane’s bestowing a token upon you; a thing as common as the offer of a young knight’s service to a fair damsel. Why, I remember in my youthful days, when I tilted in Britanny with John de Montfort, before his gallant and lion-hearted Countess, the ladies (Heaven rest

their souls ! for I believe they are most of them dead now) were so delighted with my valour, that they took off scarfs, hoods, jewels, and hanging-sleeves, to bestow them upon me as tokens ; so that, after the tournament, they found themselves stripped to the bodice and petticoat, and could only laugh at each other.”

“Indeed,” replied Sir Equitan, “there can be no doubt of the honour, in which you were held, brave Sir Espaign, by the ladies. For my own part, I do not scruple to aver, that to gain the favour of such a beauteous maiden as the lady Jane of Boulogne, I would venture my life and fortunes in any fray of arms ; I thought she looked unhappy when the Count insisted upon her alliance with his hot-tempered son. Yet for Sir Evan de Foix there is a great excuse ; the desire to possess such a prize of beauty, and the jealousy of a lover, were enough to make him throw down his gage of battle in a smaller matter. I am glad he did so, since I would not wish him of all others for a friend, who is destined to be her lord against her will. But prithee, tell me, who is this Eustace ? There is about him

that ingenuous manner, that modesty of aspect and demeanour, which bespeaks our good opinion. Who is he, and what are his misfortunes?"

" In truth," replied Sir Espaign, " who he is I cannot tell you, nor do I think that even the Count himself really knows who were his parents. All I can tell you is, that some years since, when this Eustace was a pretty child, scarce two years old, the Countess de Foix, who was charity herself, one day told my lord she had a present for him, and craved it as a boon, that he would accept her gift, and take care of it in the manner she should direct. The Count, who then dearly loved his lady, (not dreaming what the gift should prove to be), granted her boon; when, lo and behold, the Countess beckoned to one of her damsels, who speedily brought into the chamber, and put in her arms this lovely boy. ' Here, my lord,' said the Countess, ' this is my gift to you; take it, and bring up this unfortunate little stranger as your own child, and may God reward you for the good deed.' The Count was surprised, and begged his lady to tell him the story of the child. ' In truth, my lord,' replied his

wife, ‘ that I cannot do, for I have vowed by the blessed Virgin to conceal it within my own bosom, and the name of the person by whom the infant was committed to my care. Suffer me, then, alone to tell you, that this boy is truly *the child of misfortune*; and that an occasion of great necessity renders it proper you should protect its helpless innocence. This is all I can say, and may Heaven and the Virgin guide its future fortunes.’ The Count, who is very generous, received the infant, and gave it the name of Eustace the Adopted: the boy was educated at Orthes, and for some time was placed with Father Philip. The rest you know; and all that I can add is, that from his conduct, his parts, and disposition, Eustace deserves the favour and estimation in which he is now held by my Lord de Foix: though it has become matter of jealousy to some I will not name.”

“ It is very singular,” observed Sir Equitan. “ Is there no clue to find out the birth of this young man? And where is the Countess de Foix?”

“ There are some things,” replied Sir Espaign,

“ I do not wish to speak about. The Countess de Foix is alive, but—(and here the old knight looked around him, and drawing nearer to his companion, he continued in a half whisper) but she does not now live with the Count, and for certain reasons she is never named in his presence.”

“ How ?” said Sir Equitan, “ has she been guilty of any disloyal act to her husband ?”

“ Oh ! no,” continued the ancient courtier, “ there never breathed a purer spirit ; but—some other time I may tell you the matter. It is but a melancholy tale, and it is not every one I would trust with the relation of it ; for although every body knows it, yet none care to tell of it, lest they might anger my Lord de Foix.”

“ And has the Count, then, no legitimate heirs to his estate ? had he no children by the Countess ?” inquired Sir Equitan.

“ Ah ! truly had he,” replied Sir Espaign, “ as fine a son as the light of Heaven ever shone upon. But alas (here the tears started into the old man’s eyes, and made their course down his furrowed cheeks ; he wiped them hastily away, and continued), but, alas, he is lost !”

“ Dead !” exclaimed Sir Equitan.

“ Ay, dead ! dead !” replied Sir Espaign. “ Oh Gaston, sweet boy ! hadst thou lived, thy unhappy father would not now be thus bereaved of the honour of his house. Foix and Bearn would no longer bewail the loss of one worthy to inherit as their prince. And thy poor mother, like the bird whose young one has been rifled from her nest, would not now sit as the widowed dove upon the branch, who mourns alike the loss of her nursling, and the company of her mate. Oh, Sir Equitan, these old eyes of mine have looked upon such sad sights in Orthes, that rather than have beheld them, I could wish their light had been quenched in the tomb. But God’s ways are not as our ways, his will is mysterious, but be it done.”

“ You have, reverend man,” said Sir Equitan, “ excited in my bosom a painful feeling of curiosity to know more than perhaps concerns me. The story of Eustace, so remarkable, and these dark hints of the melancholy fate of the boy Gaston, and that of his unhappy mother, all make me desirous to know more, more than I

dare ask. And the Count, too, surrounded by power, wealth, and honour, chief amongst princes, as he is amongst men, can he be thus unhappy?"

" Ay, he is indeed unhappy," replied Sir Espaign, mournfully; " he bears himself well, but his heart has never known any touch of joy since the death of his son. If you observe him close, you shall note all is not well within. He is often grave, moody, and melancholy. Sometimes absent in the midst of company, and subject to sudden starts of passion. He never leaves his chamber till after the hour of noon, scarcely tastes food during the day, and never sups till midnight. Then at table none dare speak to him, till he first addresses them; he is very violent and passionate, and no one who values his freedom or his head, would venture to utter in the presence of the Count the name of his wife, or that of his unfortunate son."

" Was the manner of the boy's death then so terrible?" inquired the knight.

" I—I will not speak of it now," replied Sir Espaign; " in some other place, at another time, perhaps, you shall hear more."

“ And has the Count then,” continued Sir Equitan, “ no legitimate heir?”

“ He has no legitimate child now living,” said Sir Espaign, “ his heir is the lord of Chatelbonne, but the Count de Foix detests him. And it is thought by some (for my lord can give his estate to whom he pleases) that he intends to make his bastard son, Sir Evan de Foix, the heir to his County and dominions; and others think that should he live to see old age, and his love hold for Eustace, that even he has a better chance than the bastard to be named as the successor. These whisperings and suspicions, and the uncertainty of the heirship, make much jealousy, murmuring, and ill blood amongst certain of his household, that I care not to name. Had Gaston lived, he was the natural heir, and all would have been well. For my own part, I love and pity the noble Count de Foix; he is adored by his people and feared by his enemies, nay, and perhaps too by his friends—for they do say—it is whispered (continued the old man, lowering his voice) that the Count has a familiar.”

“ A familiar!” exclaimed Sir Equitan.

“ Ay, a familiar,” said Sir Espaign; “ for it is certain that the very day after the king of Castile was defeated by the king of Portugal at the great battle of Aljubarota, the Count de Foix knew of that defeat, and that the flower of the chivalry of Bearn had been slain in the contest. Now as Aljubarota, at the utmost speed, is ten days journey from Orthes, how could the Count know of this circumstance by any human means? But I tell you, that if it were worth while, there would not be so much as a silver spoon lost in Orthes, but the Count would know of it: and there are those who will talk about their betters, be they of church or state. Philip of Avignon, and my lord of Corasse, are both thought to have intercourse with the spirits of the air and the powers of darkness; but for my own part I say nothing. It is better sometimes to observe in peace, than to be a busy prater. But we are now come without the gates of the monastery of the Friars Minor; you shall visit the church, and after you have there suspended your helmet and shield with the usual ceremonies, we will then call in at the hotel of the Moon, in Orthes, and

take a cup with its host, Sir Ernauton du Pin. There shall we find brave company, and hear how the world goes; for Sir Ernauton usually lodges such squires and knights as the castle cannot contain, when it is overstocked with guests."

Sir Equitan gave his assent to this proposal; and whilst these knights are taking a social cup with the worthy host of the Moon, we shall say a word or two to the reader about Eustace the Adopted, and some other persons at the court of Orthes, to whose acquaintance he has lately been introduced.

CHAPTER VI.

THE TOKEN.

We that are true lovers, run into strange capers: but as all is mortal in nature, so is all nature in love mortal in folly.

SHAKSPEARE.

THE ladies, Jane of Boulogne, and Isabel de Greilly, had both been educated at the castle of Orthes. The story of the former is already told by Sir Espaign du Lyon, and that of the latter may be briefly stated. Isabel was the only legitimate child of the Captal de Buch, who had married the sister of the Count de Foix. Her mother died whilst she was in her infancy, and the Captal soon after that event committed the child to the care of her uncle, that she might be brought up with the Lady Jane, as his own life of arms would not allow him to give much attention to her education.

Upon the death of De Buch, he bequeathed

to Isabel his large possessions on the singular conditions the Count stated, in the last chapter, as he hoped by such a will to ensure for his daughter an alliance with the house of De Foix, and that she should never be induced to act in opposition to the Count, unless it were in order to devote her life to the service of Heaven as a nun.

Jane of Boulogne, Isabel de Greilly, and Eustace the Adopted, were all much of the same age, and had been playmates together during their childhood in the castle of Orthes; and till within the last few years, Eustace had shared with them in the instructions they received from the governors of youth at the castle.

The learning of the Count de Foix, and his delight in literature, proved of the utmost advantage to these young persons, as they were by his direction instructed in the arts both of reading and writing; acquirements seldom given but to those who were designed for the church. Few women in these times could read, and far less could they so much as write their names. The knights, too, as father Philip remarked,

were often but sorry clerks, many were ignorant of the first rudiments: and the greatest warrior and captain who flourished in France during the fourteenth century, the celebrated Bertrand du Guesclin, was not only ignorant, but proud of his want of learning; for he considered all literary attainments fit only for monks, and unworthy a man at arms. Bertrand would laugh at a knight who could read, and was wont to call such as were *clerks* (or learned persons) *furred hoods*. And the great English soldier, Sir Walter Manny, when with filial piety he sought the sepulchre of his father (who had been murdered whilst Sir Walter was an infant), did not feel assured he had found the right tomb, till he had sent for a clerk to read the inscription for him.

When it is considered that the manners of a court are always formed upon the example of its prince, it will no longer be a matter of surprise that the court of Orthes should have become one of the most refined and learned for its day in Europe; as De Foix was himself both a scholar and a patron of learning. Jane, Isabel, and Eustace, in the artless hours of infancy,

had grown up together with the open-hearted feelings of confidence and affection. Together they had studied, together they had pursued the sports of hawking and hunting, exercises that formed the recreation of the ladies of this period.

They had all likewise been instructed in the science of the minstrel; the lute, the harp, and the rebec, were their favourite instruments; and whilst Eustace would sometimes play and sing to them, or at others read aloud one of the MS. Romances that formed a part of the library of the Count: these maidens would embroider tapestry for the church, or work the arms of their houses upon their mantles and gowns.

Dancing also formed a part of their education, an accomplishment held in the same estimation as music, with the young and gallant followers of a court. Many characteristic traits of this appear in the manners of the times; amongst them that of the young Lord de Couci may be here noticed, for he was so proud of his "*dancing and carolling*," that when he was introduced to King Richard the Second, at his

palace of Eltham, my Lord de Couci exhibited his talents in both, “*to the great contentment of the king and his ministers.*”

A love of poetry and music (for they have ever gone hand in hand together) had been widely diffused through Europe by the Troubadours, persons who were not only minstrels, but who had rendered familiar, and improved that class of poetry, which was known by the name of Provençal. The Troubadours flourished from about the beginning of the twelfth, to the end of the fourteenth century, when, after a gradual decline, their order became extinct. At their first rise they were held honourable, and in much estimation by all ranks of people. William Count of Poitu, a soldier and a scholar, obtained a high reputation as a Troubadour. Richard the First of England was also of the order, and many even of the clergy thought it no disparagement to their dignity, to be considered as followers of the “*gaie science.*”

The general favour in which they were held so universally prevailed, that the Troubadour

was a welcome guest in the court of the prince, the hall of the baron, within the walls of a convent, or the precincts of a camp. The knights cherished the minstrel who sung to his harp the verses he had composed in record of their valour, and the lady, whose beauty was the theme of his song, welcomed the professor of an art whose chief excellence consisted in telling of her power over love and arms.

Critics have considered the Troubadour, or Provençal, as the first regular school of poetry that was formed after the decline of Roman verse, and so far is it now chiefly interesting to posterity. Although at the commencement many of the Troubadours were often persons of rank and state, yet, towards their decline, they were chiefly composed of the younger brothers and relatives of noble houses. Towards the close of their career, they lost their primitive honourable character by falling in with the vices of the times, and as they degenerated in morals, so did they in the excellence of their art: and it was not till then that the Jongleurs appear to

have been introduced. These merely sung the compositions of their predecessors, and united to the fascinations of the minstrel the arts of the juggler. To return from this digression to our subject.

Jane and Isabel, though wholly opposite in character, were uniform in taste, and this uniformity of pursuit laid the basis of a lasting friendship between them; for although dissimilar natures are often united in the bonds of the closest affection, it is rarely, if ever, found to exist where there is a total difference in taste. Thus the mind that is serious, and the mind that is gay, the tender and the inflexible character may unite: but the learned and the ignorant, the lover of nature, poetry, and art, and the mere man of the world, who is insensible to their beauties, where do we ever find that they unite in any bond of sympathy or friendship?

Jane and Isabel loved each other with the tenderest affection; the former was of a serious, candid, and constant mind, modest and timid in her deportment, of a lively sensibility, not quick

in forming an opinion unless it was sanctioned by her reason, yet, when once formed, fearless in asserting it, and inflexible in a purpose of just action or feeling.

Isabel de Greilly, though possessed of equal sensibility, did not, like her fair friend, govern it by reason. She was the very creature of feeling; fortunately her feelings were generally on the side of what is right, or, like all persons who act from feeling instead of principle, she would perpetually have been doing what was wrong. Her imagination was active and vivid, constantly presenting some new idea, or some new object, which, arousing her sensibility, gave birth (as the idea or the object changed) to a conduct often marked by caprice, but never by ill nature. It might be said that her heart was too good for her head, and that although the former sometimes led her astray, the latter generally brought her back to the right path again. Isabel was thoughtless, gay, and animated. Conscious of the fascination of her own attractions, she was somewhat vain, and would

too often (for the truth must be spoken) exercise their influence from the mere love of power, by playing upon the feelings of another.

Such were these friends, who loved with sincerity, and could admire each other without a spark of that envy or petty feeling, which too often prevents any rooted friendship subsisting between persons of the same sex and age. The companion of their childhood, the adopted brother of their riper years, the gentle Eustace, was sincerely regarded by them both. Jane truly loved him as a brother; Isabel called him such, but would scarcely allow she loved him at all, till some action, some word, betrayed the kindness of her heart towards him, when, in the next moment perhaps, whim, vanity, or caprice, or it might be the idle desire of playing with the feelings over which she had any power, would often lead her into the most unkind and contradictory acts that wounded deeply, without the intention of doing an injury.

As for Eustace, he was by nature of a serious cast of temper; the mysterious circumstances of his birth, a constant desire to know who he really

was, the wish to believe himself nobly descended, and at the same time the apprehension that he might prove perhaps (as Sir Evan de Foix often scornfully intimated) to be but the offspring of a base peasant; these conflicting hopes and apprehensions early tinctured his mind with melancholy; and though to a superficial observer he might appear, from his quiet and reserved demeanour, almost insensible, yet, on the slightest word, from the least circumstance that really touched his heart, he was, in a moment, animated or overpowered by the keen sensibility of his feelings. Eustace was *good*; he was therefore grateful; grateful to the Count, and dearly attached to the interests of his benefactor. Eustace would have preferred death to any act that might however distantly impeach his loyalty to De Foix.

The soul of Eustace was the soul of honour, not merely in that acceptation in which the word was then generally understood, as applying to deeds of arms, but in its largest sense, as influencing every thought, every act of the heart, where honour was held sacred. Brave and generous, humbled by misfortune, but of a proud

and lofty feeling in the cause of truth, Eustace was deservedly beloved by the Count, and envied or hated by men of meaner spirits, who contemn whatever is beyond their sphere, and yet fear that very height which they censure, because they can never attain it. Notwithstanding his thoughtful character and refined feelings Eustace was skilled in arms; the sterner virtues of a soldier imposed but little restraint on the tender sensibilities of his heart, and the desire he entertained to discover his birth, to prove himself worthy in arms of being descended from a noble race, had accompanied him from infancy to youth; it had become a part of himself, a feeling that influenced every act of his life. Thus had he grown up, affectionate to his fair adopted sisters, grateful to his benefactor, and kind to every human creature within the sphere of his influence or conduct.

Some days had now elapsed since the arrival of Sir Equitan at Orthes, during which time he had been honourably entertained by the Count, and had assiduously cultivated the favour of the lady Jane of Boulogne, by those thousand little

acts that almost imperceptibly win upon the heart; these can scarcely be defined, and for them there is no name, unless we call them the offspring of sympathy and affection; acts that are felt before they are acknowledged, and can alone be understood by the heart capable of the same feelings their language can thus delicately express.

There are persons whose minds are formed in moulds so suited to each other, that no sooner do they meet than they feel incited to regard and esteem by the similarity of their thoughts, by the force of sympathy and congeniality of soul. And there are others, whose natures, on the contrary, are wholly opposite, that neither time nor circumstances can ever make them blend with any touch of unison. Thus we may be strangers with the companion of years; we may be friends with the companion of yesterday.

Whether any, or all of these reflections may be applicable to the lady Jane and Sir Equitan, it is impossible with certainty to declare; but we may suppose they were; for true it is, that notwithstanding the cunning of Father Philip,

the jealousy of Sir Evan de Foix, and the declared purpose of the Count to bestow her in marriage upon his son, the lady Jane was not averse to receiving the vows of love and constancy, which Sir Equitan seized every opportunity of offering at her feet.

True it is, that on certain occasions, particularly when in the presence of the Count, the lovers managed so adroitly, that the lively Isabel contrived, from pure good nature to her blushing friend, to turn the attention of Sir Equitan chiefly towards herself, and to receive, as personally intended, many a delicate word or token of affection that was designed by him for the lady Jane. This conduct gave but little alarm to the Count, for the gay spirit and the thoughtless disposition of Isabel de Greilly had rendered her a sort of privileged person, who might do a thousand acts, and say as many things without any meaning, which in a different or more serious character, would be not only inconsistent, but supposed to imply some grave purpose.

Sir Gracien de Foix was nothing jealous of these coquettishnesses in Isabel, for as he was too

much in love with himself ever to feel any spark of that fine passion for his lively cousin, he was wholly indifferent towards her. The Count had told him he was to marry Isabel; he had no objection to marry her, and he had no objection not to marry her. If the Count had given to him a young greyhound, or Isabel de Greilly, either were likely to be equally well received; and yet Sir Gracien had so good an opinion of himself, that he never doubted but that Isabel in her heart, *must* prefer him to all other suitors; even his being so frequently an object of her ridicule, he considered but a certain mark of that preference which female modesty induced her thus to disguise.

Yet there was nothing positively bad in Sir Gracien de Foix; he was of a handsome person, and had qualities which, but for his intolerable vanity, might have done honour to his family. But, like a pernicious weed, that, if once suffered to take root, will overspread and obscure the productions of the richest soil, so did vanity in this young man prevent the growth of whatever is most estimable in youth.

The conduct we have just noticed in Isabel towards Sir Equitan, gave pain to some persons, and deceived others; but it never did for a moment deceive either Prior Philip, or Sir Evan de Foix; the former cunning, adroit, and vigilant, was seldom deceived, where his interest rendered it necessary he should be clearly informed respecting the truth; he had also many spies and retainers beside his great engine John the chronicler, and Sir Evan de Foix was rendered too watchful, too quick-sighted by love, to be easily deceived respecting the affections of Jane of Boulogne.

Well could he remark, that her colour would suddenly change when she addressed Sir Equitan, that her voice often faltered, and that in her whole air and demeanour towards him, there was a constraint, sometimes an embarrassment, that she evinced towards no other to whom she addressed herself. Whilst Sir Equitan, he observed, could freely talk and laugh with Isabel; he could see her enter the room without a change of aspect, and with the gallant spirit of the age, he could discourse with her about love, or compliment her upon her beauty. But with Jane

of Boulogne Sir Equitan was less lively, and more timid; with her his eyes spoke more than his tongue; the latter seemed to forget to pronounce her beautiful, whilst the former appeared riveted on her charms.

It was during a delightful afternoon, a few days previous to the Festival of the Virgin, whilst these ladies and young knights were recreating themselves in the garden of the palace, that Eustace suddenly joined them. His countenance looked more than usually dejected, and there was altogether something in his air and manner that struck every one present as remarkable: contrary to his usual reserve, he talked quick and successively, and soon after fell into such a fit of abstraction that for a time he appeared insensible to those about him. Each ventured some jest upon this demeanour. Eustace faintly smiled, and seemed to make an effort in assuming his ordinary manner, alleging some slight excuse as an apology for what had been observed.

“ In sooth,” said Sir Evan de Foix, “ one would think, gentle Eustace, that the prospect of knighthood was ill suited to your health: and that the vigil of arms you are now nightly

keeping in the church of the Friars Minor, had presented to your view some spectred object of the other world. Sir Peter Arnaut de Bearn, who lies buried there, has he walked? or does he lie just as quiet and well-armed as he used to do, by the side of the great east window of the church?"

" You are merry knights," replied Eustace, " and I confess that I may have some appearances about me that excite surprise, for my mind has been agitated with many anxious thoughts: the honour of becoming a member of so august a profession as that of chivalry has seriously affected me. I am to combat also for the first time in the lists as a knight, and I would fain acquit myself well."

" Then in truth," said Sir Equitan, " you must first choose a fair lady to be the mistress of your heart; for a knight without love, is like a sky without a sun: he has its radiance neither to warm nor to guide him. Follow my example, Eustace; for you must bear some lady's token with you to the tournament, or you will never come off victor. Were I in your place, I would beg the lady Isabel de Greilly, in pity for the

wounds her own bright eyes inflict, to give me some token of her favour."

Eustace looked confused at this speech, but turning to Isabel he exclaimed, " Dear lady, Sir Equitan counsels me well; I would crave a token of you, that should animate my courage, and give me a hope, that the good will of her who bestowed it, went with me for my success in the tournament."

" Nay," cried Isabel, " and wherefore should you seek a token at my hands? Here is my fair cousin of Boulogne, ask her for one: and should she grant the request, you have most probably a double gift—that of my lady Jane's favour, and a glove from Sir Evan de Foix, to whom you will do a great kindness, in thus offering him occasion for throwing down the gage; for Sir Evan hath a wonderous love of battle, and he would at this moment fain quarrel with me, but that hood and gite* cannot buckle on casque and haubergeon. Prithee, dear lady Jane, bestow on Eustace a favour; for, if I were in your place,

* Gown. " And she came after, in a *gite* of red." Chaucer, Reve's Tale, line 3952.

I would teach fifty Sir Evan de Foix, and as many Counts to boot that I would have my own will, and both Sir Equitan and Eustace should go to the tournament, so covered with my tokens, that they would find no lack of housings even for their horse. And as to jealousy, why Sir Evan should have most excellent cause: so that the lover that is, should teach the husband that is to be, to hope for full indulgence in his favourite humour; and what wife can go beyond that mark to please her lord? Besides she will give by it a constant theme to keep alive his spirits, for fear they should sleep, and matrimony become as dull and inanimate as the penance of the hooded monk."

"Your gay mood, Lady Isabel," said Sir Evan, "but that we know your words are lighter than your purpose, would show a bad example to your own sex, and alarm ours; we should fear to trust you."

"Oh! never trust me," replied the gay Isabel, "for I have constancy in nothing but the resolution to satisfy my own will. The Count, who is never wiser than when he manages the

affairs of other people, to make them suit his own, has destined me for his son, Sir Gracien de Foix, and my Lady Jane for you, Sir Evan. I would therefore counsel both of you to take example from Sir Gracien and myself. We have no jealousy, no throwing down of gauntlets, and drawing the sword of battle upon slight occasions. Do now but look upon Sir Gracien, and see how comfortably his love sits about him, it neither disturbs his rest, alters his good mien, nor makes him think one jot the less of his new armour, and his gay surcoat. Yet for all that, poor Sir Gracien is so deeply enamoured with one person in this world besides his mistress (continued Isabel, archly) that did I not now and then, out of pure charity, smile upon him, and bid him woo me, his thoughts are so possessed by the other object of his admiration, that he would forget the actual presence of his mistress."

"To forget the presence of the Lady Isabel de Greilly," said Sir Gracien with an affected softness of manner, "would be impossible; as well might I forget the properties and offices that belong to gentle blood, in the quality of a

knight. I, fair Isabel, although unused to ask a grace of any lady, yet *I* also would crave some token at your hands to bear with me to the tournament. Give me, therefore, I beseech you, that clasp of bright gold, methinks it is a more becoming token for a gentleman to bear about with him than a certain quantity and measure of a lady's silks."

"As to the clasp," replied Isabel, "it being as you say of gold, it is no fit emblem to be craved by the lips of true love. For gold and love, they say, never go together, but they presently part company, the one to seek the palace of Hymen through the paths of ambition, and the other, too generally to pass his way, drooping and weeping, till he takes shelter within the despised, but pleasant cot of some humble rustic. No, no, Sir Gracien, love must never ask for gold. But yet I will give you a token, one that shall show no falsehood, and will never deceive you but with your own good will."

And so saying, the gay Isabel presented Sir Gracien with a small mirror set in ivory, such as

the ladies of this period were wont to carry about with them, or sometimes to keep by the side of their crucifix on their dressing table. The mirror was neatly set within a rim of ivory, and upon the back part, carved in the same material, appeared a representation of the meeting of two lovers. The lady bore upon her arm a squirrel which she held by a string; two attendants were seen in the back ground, the one holding the horse of the gallant, and the other playing upon the rebec, or three-stringed viol.

Sir Gracien de Foix, whose egregious vanity either did not, or would not let him appear to comprehend the satirical meaning of the token, received it with pure good will. He admired the clear beauty of the mirror, as he gave a satisfactory glance at his own features reflected in it, and turning to Isabel, thanked her for having bestowed upon him such a fine token of her favour.

“ Upon the faith I owe St. Ann,” said Isabel, “ the finest thing about it will be the gay trapplings it shows, whenever it reflects the braveries

of Sir Gracien de Foix. And yet were I Sir Gracien, it should only be consulted on holy days, for then think how good a lesson the mirror would teach! Father Philip, or the preaching Franciscan, who is come amongst us, could scarcely speak a better. For you can never look upon it, and see reflected those long ringlets, that are so carefully set, each in its own proper sphere, but you must presently think how soon they will be there reflected white and grizzled. And your cheeks too, which look as if they had never felt the sun, excepting through the lattice guarded by silken hangings, you must remember, that in a little time, the mirror will show them to you pale, yellow, and wrinkled with age. In short, you can never contemplate what Sir Gracien now is, without thinking what Sir Gracien will soon be, when no more traces shall be left of all Sir Gracien once loved, than can be seen in the old winter-withered bough, of the once young tree that was budding forth its summer trophies."

" If this be the use of your token, fair Isabel,"

said Sir Equitan, “ you had better have bestowed upon Sir Gracien the skull that decorates a hermit’s cell, which will tell the whole lesson in one word, for death is the end of all things.”

“ Ah ! truly is it,” replied Isabel, “ and the beginning of many, especially in matters of affection : for thus we weep for the lover in death, whom we scorned whilst he was alive ; and our best friends we often begin to love when the tomb has covered them from our hate. And how often do those who have laboured all their lives to gain riches, never begin to use them till the first coin properly bestowed is paid to the maker of their graves !”

“ Indeed,” said Jane of Boulogne, “ your merry mood, Isabel, might teach some persons with as much truth and more temper than many a graver lecture ; but you sport everywhere, and rest nowhere. You are still wide from the mark, for what has death or this discourse to do with the token Eustace craved at your hands ? Prithee, Isabel, return to the right point.”

“ Why,” exclaimed Isabel, “ did he not ask ,

of me a token for the tournament? and I always thought that tournaments, battles, and death, had been in close alliance."

" Ay," said Eustace, " I did indeed crave a token, and if I were to ask the golden clasp, it would not be for the value of the precious metal, as it is rated by worldly estimation, but as a proper token; for gold being the purest, and most ductile of all metals, it is a fit emblem for a young knight whose thoughts should be pure as refined gold, and as easy to bend to any holy purpose. And since you have so pleasantly contented Sir Gracien, give me the clasp, fair Isabel, it is the first favour I have ever craved at your hand, and I will endeavour not to disgrace it in the first bearing of my lance."

" Why then," said Isabel, " I will grant your desire, and you shall have the golden token; come, prepare to receive it."

With these words she took the bright clasp from her bosom, whilst Eustace bent on one knee before her, prepared to receive the gift; but as he knelt down, his cheek turned pale, and the hand he held extended trembled with

emotion. Isabel glanced her quick eye upon him, and still continued holding the token within her own hand.

Sir Equitan who stood near the kneeling youth, upon hearing the words of Isabel, exclaimed, “In truth, fair Eustace, a gift so precious must add such valour to your arm, that few can hope to meet you in the lists on equal terms: that little clasp shall make you victor.”

“Nay then,” said Isabel, with a light and careless air, “if my token carry with it such invincible power, it is too much to bestow upon one knight, so you Sir Equitan shall even share it with Eustace;” and so saying, Isabel took the delicately-worked gold clasp and snapped it between her fingers. And presenting one half of it to Sir Equitan, and the other to Eustace, she added, laughing, “There, share my good will between you, and may you both be equally the victors of the tournament.”

Sir Equitan was about to reply to Isabel, but she bid him only thank her by his success in arms, and without noticing Eustace, she bounded away with a light step and left the

company surprised, and not knowing what to think of the scene that had just passed.

Eustace felt deeply hurt: it was the first favour he had ever asked of Isabel, and that too at a time when it was really considered one of import, for he had solicited it in order to bear it with him to the tournament at his first essay in arms. Isabel by her conduct, although but in a trifling matter, had thus placed a stranger (by making him a sharer in her favour) upon an equality with one who was the friend of years, the brother of her childhood.

Stung to the very soul by such a light and unkind act, Eustace could ill brook the merriment of the knights, occasioned by the disappointment he had received from Isabel. He hastily left them, and followed in quest of her to a distant part of the garden.

CHAPTER VII.

THE INTERVIEW.

For aught that ever I could read,
Could ever hear by tale or history,
The course of true love never did run smooth ;
But either it was different in blood,
Or else misgrafted in respect of years,
Or else it stood upon the choice of friends ;
Or if there were a sympathy in choice,
War, death, or sickness did lay siege to it,
Making it momentary as a sound,
Swift as a shadow, short as any dream.

SHAKESPEARE.

To those who are at all acquainted with the secrets of the human heart, it must be known that when the mind is deeply imbued with any serious passion, nothing can more terribly jar upon its feelings with the touch of discord, than that of ill timed mirth. It is like the violation of whatever is held sacred; it breaks through the sanctuary of our most hallowed affections, and drags them forth to the heartless mockery

of the insensible mind ; it scoffs at pain, and often turns into ridicule those finer feelings the scoffer has never known, and could never understand.

Eustace at this moment felt its effects ; he followed the steps of Isabel, and having for some time sought her in vain, he at length joined her just after she had entered a little gothic pleasure house that had been erected in the gardens of the palace. It stood near a woody recess, surrounded by flowering shrubs, and sheltered from the heat of the sun by the graceful boughs of the tall and beautiful acacia. A small stream of water, near the entrance, had been guided by the hand of art, to fall over some masses of granite, whose moss-grown tops, decorated with several rock and water plants, contributed to the charm of the spot. The low murmurings of the stream made a pleasing and a lulling sound, that was often accompanied by strains of the sweetest harmony ; for it was here that the ladies of the castle, or some minstrel of their suite, frequently beguiled the sultry hours of noon by playing upon their instruments, and singing a ballad or a roundelay. And it was

here too that they often repeated an Ave Maria before the figure of the Virgin and child, which stood within a niche in the interior of the building.

Isabel was now seated at the base of this niche, and all gay and thoughtless as she was, although she had so recently, wantonly, and deeply wounded the feelings of Eustace, she looked at this moment as if wholly unconscious of the pain she had so lately inflicted. Eustace was struck by her appearance ; strong and mingled emotions seemed for a while to deny him the power of utterance, and he could only faintly exclaim, “ Oh, Isabel, I am most wretched ! ” The energy of manner, and the disordered countenance of him who pronounced these words, effectually disarmed any spirit of levity that might still lurk within the bosom of Isabel : she gazed upon him with anxious feelings, and uttered but the name of “ Eustace.”

He paused, and advancing near to her, seized her hand, which he pressed with ardour to his lips, as the tears burst from his eyes : “ Oh, Isabel,” he said, “ why, why are you thus wan-

tonly cruel to him you have rendered the most unhappy of beings? I know well my fate, that I am doomed to a life of hopeless suffering; but could I have seen in you some touch of pity for me, some sympathy, I think I could better bear the sorrows that await me. But thus, thus wantonly to sport with my feelings, it is too much!"

Isabel cast her eyes upon the ground, she did not speak, nor did she attempt to withdraw the hand that Eustace still held within his grasp. "Isabel," he continued, "do not thus remain silent: speak to me, I conjure you, look but upon me, and tell me that I am not hateful to you; say but you pity me, and I shall be more a man: these tears, as they fall from my eyes, reproach me for thus giving way to the feelings that feed their source. But think how dreadful is my lot. Would to Heaven that I had died ere the charity of the Countess de Foix had placed me in a situation, where I am exposed to all the impressions that make up the honour and the delights of other men, and yet where I can only feel them to plunge me into deeper misery."

Isabel wept, and unable longer to restrain her feelings, she faintly answered, “ Eustace, too well you know, that you do not suffer alone.”

“ How can I think it?” continued Eustace; “ there are moments when you are all my tenderest hopes could wish you, kind, gentle, and compassionate, pure as the angel spirits which guard your rest. And Oh ! Isabel, there are times when you tear from me- all these happy thoughts, and make me believe you to be like the light hearted, who rend the wound they make with wanton cruelty.”

“ How little,” said Isabel, “ do you know my heart ! believe me, Eustace, mirth and careless words are not always the indications of a mind at peace. Happiness is of a tranquil temper, for her feelings are those of certainty. She knows neither the fluctuations of hope, nor the anxieties of fear. The sorrowful, not unfrequently, endeavour to divert by mirth the incessant cares that in secret prey upon their heart: I have often smiled when mine has ached with anguish. Am I, think you, Eustace, less

wretched than yourself? I have but a choice of evils, the cell of a nun, or the hand of Sir Gracien de Foix."

" Ay, it is that," replied Eustace, " which distracts me: brought up with you from childhood, I loved you before I knew the name of love. In our infancy we had no separate hours, we played, we learnt together: together we wandered through this very garden, and plucked the flowers which then looked gay as our own happy state. We had but one mind, one heart; together we grew up, we knew but one common lot; and together we have worshipped that Power who made us, who planted within our breast the feelings that have governed us, the feelings of nature. Can they be wrong? No, Isabel, it is the world which teaches artificial feelings, and such are sinful. But those implanted in us by the great Creator, are like his own beneficence, holy, virtuous and sacred; dependent alone on Him who gave them. Were they but unmixed with other feelings, think how full might be our cup of happiness!"

" Yes," said Isabel, " but as it is, the cup is

presented to our lips, whilst we are forbidden to taste of it."

" Do you feel this, Isabel?" continued Eustace: " then indeed I am wretched. Torn by a thousand contending passions, how often have I wished, as I have laid my head upon the pillow that offered no rest to me, that I might never rise to view the morning's light! I am bound to the Count de Foix by every tie of duty and of gratitude. I would rather sacrifice my life, nay, Isabel, were it possible, I would rather sacrifice what is far dearer to me, my love, than I would commit the least disloyal act against my Lord de Foix."

" To love is no dishonour," said Isabel.

" No," cried Eustace, " but such is my deep sense of the duties I owe the Count, that I tax my very thoughts which war against his will. I am the child of his bounty, and when I daily receive some fresh instance of his goodness towards me, and mark how entire his confidence rests upon my integrity, Oh, Isabel! how can I repay the kindness of my generous benefactor, by becoming the instrument of destruction to his

peace; to ruin all his hopes, to steal from him the affections of her he loves as his own child? But then to resign you to Sir Gracien de Foix! to give up such sweet perfections to him who cannot feel their worth, to one who loves nothing but himself—Isabel, the thought is madness.— There are moments, when driven by despair, I am almost tempted to rush into the presence of the Count, there to tell him the story of my unhappy love: and to bid him crush at his feet the ungrateful Eustace, the base-born peasant, who has dared repay his bounty by such ingratitude, such bold presumption.”

“ Do not,” exclaimed Isabel emphatically, clasping her hands, “ do not, I beseech you, let any excess of feeling tempt you to the commission of an act so rash. Your noble gratitude to the Count has rendered you blind to his character: to do what you but hint, would be to rush on certain death. He now considers you entirely the creature of his will; that he has moulded you like wax in the hand that takes any print we give it, and he does not dream you could ever entertain a thought, but such as he

suggests. Once undeceive him, and all your generous virtue would be as nothing in his sight. He would spurn you from him; and his very feelings for you, now so powerful, would still hold their degree, although they changed their nature. His love for you is great, so would be his hatred. Do not rely upon his affection: think not the pride of De Foix would ever consent that Isabel de Greilly, his niece, should form an alliance with one of unknown birth. I tell you, no prince breathing is prouder than the Count, for the vain honour of his house. And were such an alternative but put to the proof, rather would he see these limbs of mine torn piecemeal from each other, than consent to any supposed degradation of his blood. O Eustace! I implore you, I would kneel and conjure you, as you love me, as you hold dear the being whose life hangs but on yours, do not act thus rashly: be watchful, wary; and never, never trust the Count with the sad story of our most disastrous love."

Eustace, whilst the beautiful girl thus addressed him, stood gazing upon her, as if lost to

every surrounding object, lost to himself, to every alarm, and alone sensible that this impassioned address for his preservation was made to him by the being he adored.

“Isabel,” he exclaimed, “be ever thus, thus kind, and the worst ills of fortune that can befall me, what are they? Nothing.—Possessed of your affection, I am happy. To gain you what would I not attempt, what would I not sacrifice? every thing but my honour; for could I sacrifice that, I should be unworthy of Isabel. Dear, generous girl, pardon my reproaches, pardon my suspicions, forgive every angry thought. I am but as a wayward child, that fears he knows not what. Think how dear you are to me: I have no friend but the Count; and he, you say, regards me but as his creature. I have nor home, nor name, country nor family, you are all to me: were I dead, there is no eye but that of Isabel’s that would drop a tear upon my grave! How can I ever part from you?”

“Why these sad thoughts?” said Isabel: “something may happen; or should it come to the worst, all light as my conduct may seem to

many, my heart is true to you. I will rather devote my days to the cell of a nun, than wear them out in the double falsehood of a wretched wife, false to my love, false to my duty: these lips shall never so far belie my heart. Yet something may be done to save us both from ruin."

"What can be done?" replied Eustace, "what are my hopes? I will never gain you by dis-honour; there is no way but that which leads to death, that can ever give peace to the wretched Eustace."

"Talk not thus, I beseech you," said Isabel; "let us rather think how to avoid evils than to imagine them. Eustace, there is a boon I would crave of you, and you shall not deny it me."

"I can deny you nothing," replied Eustace: "what is it you would ask?"

"It is," said Isabel, "that when you combat in the lists, you will avoid all unnecessary danger—and that—" Isabel hesitated.

"That—what?" exclaimed Eustace.

"That," continued Isabel still hesitating, "you would not combat with Sir Equitan: but

if it should be in your power, that you would rather aid him, and defend him against the malice of others."

Isabel blushed deeply; Eustace gazed upon her with astonishment, and exclaimed, "This, Isabel, is a strange boon to ask of me, who have so dearly suffered by your favour to Sir Equitan. Nor can I even conjecture, (without admitting base and unworthy suspicions, which I will not,) wherefore his safety can be so dear to you, that it should be thus coupled with my own. Isabel, it would be generous in you to tell me frankly wherefore this request is made. Let me but know the motive. But you are silent, and I cannot ask nor beg the knowledge of what you are thus desirous to withhold. Do not, I beseech you, again trifle with my feelings. But no, you cannot thus deceive me; I will trust you, abuse not therefore the confidence of an unbounded love; I will grant your request: Sir Equitan shall fear no treachery if I am near him."

"You are generous, Eustace," said Isabel, warmly; "but remember the first part of my request was for your own safety."

“Alas!” replied Eustace, “what is it you ask of me but a cruel boon? You would save me from death, to have me live in misery: yet, Isabel, your boon is granted, I will do nothing rashly. For the rest, I am but as one marked for suffering. Yet were there but a ray of hope that time or any chance might give you to me, guided by that single ray, it should lead me on through the paths of human casualty, like the star of the morning that glimmers through the darkest night, giving a faint promise of the day. I have not yet learnt the full purpose of the Count, but I find that I am destined to be the leader of some enterprise against my lord of Armagnac. Have you heard aught?”

“No,” said Isabel; “but whatever is the enterprise, be careful of your life. Long, I hope, it will not detain you from the castle; for remember, Eustace, there is one who will anxiously watch the hour of your return, and who may beguile the time of your absence with some follies that might wound your peace.”

“Say not so,” cried Eustace, “for there I fear to trust you, I fear to trust myself; when I

am absent from you, a thousand fears, and sometimes your own conduct, creates such wild alarms, such violent emotions within my bosom, that even in these hours of happiness, I fear to trust you. Remember, too, your strange request about Sir Equitan. Why this mystery? And then but this very afternoon, why did you thus lightly make him an equal sharer in the token I craved at your hands? Sir Equitan, too, is often with you; I saw you but this morning in earnest conference with him. Why did you give him the token?"

" I gave it him," replied Isabel, " to satisfy the whim of a moment: and Sir Equitan is a fair and gallant knight; one whom I would freely countenance, to mortify the vanity of Sir Gracien de Foix."

" And to torture me," said Eustace. " Isabel, I conjure you, as you value my life, do not thus make a vain and dangerous trial of my temper: I am willing to believe that Sir Equitan is no more to you than any other knight; tell me therefore frankly, to relieve my mind from the anxiety of unsatisfied conjecture, why is his safety

thus dear to you? and what was the nature of your earnest conference with him this morning in the garden? I have no thought I would conceal from you; and must I thus vainly solicit a return of that confidence I fondly hoped was mutual?"

Isabel blushed, looked confused, and conjured Eustace to urge her no farther: there was nothing, she said, in the conduct of Sir Equitan particularly addressed to herself; but there was something, she admitted, which she could not entirely reveal, respecting her conference with Sir Equitan, even to Eustace. He was astonished at her words, and his countenance betrayed marks of the greatest agitation. He was about to reply, when at the moment the sound of a footstep struck upon her ear; the door of the gothic pleasure-house was gently opened, and Prior Philip stood before the surprised lovers.

The confusion of their appearance was too evident to escape the penetrating eye of the Prior, but he passed it unnoticed, and apologized for his intrusion. The manner of his apology implied

more than the terms in which it was made, it seemed to say that the interruption he feared was not one of an ordinary nature, and that he had probably broken in upon a secret conference. Isabel was abashed, and cast her eyes upon the ground; the confusion of Eustace increased, whilst his own disturbed feelings, from what had just passed before the Prior's entrance, rendered the task of assuming composure still more difficult. He wished the holy man in his cell, or any where, rather than thus to have interrupted them at such a moment by his presence.

“I fear,” said Philip, “I am here an intruder; but I came in quest of the lady Isabel, whom I thought to find alone; as Sir Equitan, the *Poursuivant d'Amour* (who, I doubt not, well deserves that addition to his name, for he is most devoted in his love of beauty), told me that the lady Isabel was here, and that he was waiting to meet her in the garden.”

Eustace, whose feelings had been before much irritated, was struck by this speech. What had just past, the scene of the afternoon, all recurred

to his mind, and the latent embers of jealousy that ever lurk within the bosom of true love, now caught the flame, and were speedily lighted up. He looked at Isabel with an agitated and reproachful countenance, exclaiming in a voice of vainly suppressed emotion, “ Shall I, Lady Isabel, conduct you to this appointed meeting with Sir Equitan? he expects you, it seems; it were pity to delay him.”

The pride of Isabel, offended by the tone of irony in which this speech was concluded, and by the renewed suspicions of Eustace, after the assurances she had but just given him of her affection, for a time overcame her tenderness, and instead of soothing the disturbed feelings of Eustace, she rather irritated them, by answering in a cold and marked manner—

“ No, Eustace, my conference with Sir Equitan, does not need your presence, I can seek him alone. Good even’ to you, holy Prior, I will attend you at the accustomed hour in my oratory.” And so saying, without deigning to look upon Eustace, (for perhaps she feared to trust her heart in opposition to her pride), she

left the apartment with a quick and hurried step. Had Isabel but looked at the countenance of the unhappy Eustace, it is most probable she would have changed her purpose, and instead of leaving him to the misery of his irritated feelings, she would have remained to soothe them.

Prior Philip had long been perfectly well acquainted with the state of the affections of these young persons ; he had delivered the speech relative to Sir Equitan with a mischievous intent, though he had spoken entirely correct as to the information he received of Isabel's being in the pleasure-house, but with certain *omissions* of words, which, had they been subjoined, would have entirely altered the nature of her expected interview with Sir Equitan, and would have caused no uneasiness to Eustace ; for Sir Equitan only said to the Prior, that Isabel was in the garden, and that the Lady Jane of Boulogne and himself were expecting her to join them before they returned into the palace. Thus it was on this occasion (as it may be often seen in the affairs of human life) that truth spoken but in

part, may sometimes do as much mischief as entire falsehood.

The Prior had his own reasons for dropping the few words above stated; he well knew they would act upon the mind of Eustace with painful effect, and having overheard some part of the discourse respecting Sir Equitan, he was aware they were well-timed to assist his purposes. The florins of Isabel, which were to be at his disposal, as Prior of the monastery of St. Mary, in case she took the veil, had so far excited the cupidity of Philip, that he had long resolved to attempt every means to induce Isabel to become a nun.

The Prior had attentively observed her character, and his habitual study of human nature, rendered him a great master in that art, which can penetrate into the recesses of the mind. He knew Isabel to be thoughtless, vain, and headstrong, but of a tender and affectionate heart; the vivacity of her spirits, and the superiority of her sense, he also knew, had taught her to look with abhorrence upon a cloister. With her,

superstition had no power; he knew therefore that there was but one way to bend her to his will, by acting upon her mind through the medium of her affections; and he doubted not, that, could he once but deeply engage, and then disappoint them, the fervour of her feelings, and the enthusiasm of her character, would render it an easy matter for him to seize the moment, when the mind rushes from one state of desperation to another, to induce her at once to declare for a religious life.

Philip had witnessed the growing affection subsisting between Isabel and Eustace; and he had artfully encouraged it, but not by any direct means; the effect was felt, whilst the cause was unseen. In furtherance of his plan, it was the Prior who had first also suggested to De Foix the union of Isabel with Sir Gracien: Philip knew that to this the lady never would consent when it came to the point; and the Count, ever firm in purpose, having once declared such an union should take place, he was aware would never relinquish the design. This therefore placed an effectual barrier between Eustace and

Isabel; and it only remained to create some powerful cause of dissension between the lovers, that might entirely destroy their mutual confidence in each other, for the Prior to seize upon such an opportunity of placing the disappointed Isabel within the walls of a religious house, where he would take especial care she should have no farther communication with the world; whilst the unfortunate attachment of poor Eustace might, if necessary, be made the instrument of his ruin with the Count.

Such was the artful plan, the refined intrigue of Prior Philip. He was well aware of the possibility of its failure; but he was also aware, that in attempting to gain the gold of Isabel, he had to play a desperate game; for it was only upon her becoming a nun that he could possess it: should she be the wife of Eustace, or of Sir Gracien, the florins were equally lost to him.

Ambition was the ruling passion of the selfish prior. It was to further his own ambitious views that he wished the violent-spirited Sir Evan de Foix (upon whose mind he acted by alternately flattering his passions, and awakening his fears

by the terrors of superstition) to be named as successor to the Count. From this motive also he was desirous that Evan should be the husband of Jane of Boulogne, that he might recover for her those lands, in the diocese of Comminges, of which see the Prior hoped by these means to become the bishop. It was in order to gain wealth, to help his ambitious projects, that he intrigued to possess the florins of Isabel's inheritance. In short, ambition was the deity the Prior worshipped beneath the hypocritical sanctity of his gown and hood. For that he would sacrifice whatever is held most sacred on earth, and for that he had sacrificed his hopes of Heaven. Having thus far explained his secret motives of action, with all the windings of his dark intrigues, we must now return to our narrative: thus necessarily interrupted for the better comprehension of his plans.

When Isabel quitted the gothic pleasure-house, Philip was left alone with Eustace. The distressed state of mind in the latter was too evident to escape notice: this the Prior knew, and

therefore assuming an air of compassion, thus addressed him :

“ My son ! whence this emotion ? what is it thus deeply affects you ? You look like one whose feelings are all bound up within such grief as points but to despair. Eustace, I cannot see you thus without wishing to know the cause, that I may speak to you the words of consolation, or guide your wandering thoughts with some friendly direction. Tell me, what is it thus moves you ?”

“ Nothing,” replied Eustace, “ or perhaps some foolish thoughts. I am to combat for the first time in the lists, and, to be like all other knights, I craved a token of the Lady Isabel.”

“ Ay,” said Philip carelessly, “ and which she bestowed upon Sir Equitan, who made her no request.”

The pale cheek of Eustace became flushed by a sudden glow of anger at these words of the artful Prior, but he did not reply to them.

“ And is this all ?” continued Philip. “ No, no, my son, there is more in this. Eustace, you

were once under my care, the child of my instruction. I taught you the craft of human learning, and to fathom the depths of nature in many of her secrets. I taught you, too, the mysteries of our holy faith. I was your spiritual father, and I would now guide your unwary steps through the dangerous paths of youth as your earthly father, would you but trust me; but there is one thing, however, that I see the world has taught you—to deceive your friend."

"No!" exclaimed Eustace, "that reproach is most unjust: I have deceived myself. No, Prior, I am not ungrateful; still do I remember that to your instruction I owe the best treasure of my manhood—learning and knowledge. But, oh forgive me! there are some feelings that overpower my mind, for which I condemn myself, and yet I dare not trust them even to you."

"How?" replied Philip, "so young, and yet so secret. This looks not well: there is no mystery in virtuous thoughts, and the feelings of youth should be as open to the light of Heaven as the fair dawn of their years."

"Alas!" said Eustace, "there are some feel-

ings which can alone be understood by the heart that is their victim ; feelings for which the world has no sympathy, and which the grave brow of severe wisdom, and austere age, would but despise ; yet they make up the sum of many a young man's lot. I beseech you, father, spare me ; I am not an ingrate, nor do I despise the counsels of the elder and the sage. I cannot dissimulate the truth, and yet I would not reveal it."

" Then will I read it," replied the Prior, and he fixed his keen eye with a determined look upon the countenance of Eustace ; " I can mark in that wan cheek, in the melancholy of your mood, your love of solitude, and sudden change of purpose, some outward workings from a hidden cause. These all tell me, that a deep-rooted feeling lurks within the breast ; they are but signals and sure notes of a perturbed and anxious mind. And think you I cannot mark, that at the very name of Isabel de Greilly, the blood will rise into your cheek ? Oh blind and foolish fondness ! Is it thus you would shipwreck all the rich lading of your golden hopes, to follow a

vain shadow? Are your years of manhood thus to shame themselves to wear out their prime in the soft dalliance of a light affection, and for one who values you even as she would her young falcon, that she accustoms to her lure?"

" Father!" exclaimed Eustace, " I will not utter falsehood, nor can I deign to evade a truth. I do not blush to feel my love is not a crime. Nor is it in my power to look on Isabel but with dear affection. Yet I know the danger, the madness, of such feelings; but as I hope to find my rest in Heaven, they are involuntary. I never sought her love by any studied suit, nor by dishonest means. I have never hoped to win her. Censure, despise me if you will, but spare her name. Do not, I beseech you, thus wantonly defame a creature, so sweet, so pure, and gentle!"

" You talk of her," said Philip, " as a boy would of his young dove that he fondles in its cage. So sweet, so pure, and gentle! Her sweetness is like that of the flower, which spreads abroad its blossom for every insect which may flutter by and choose to taste it. Her

purity is falsehood, and her gentleness that of the young tigress, who crouches till she may spring for your destruction. You know not the heart of woman. It is vain and wanton in all, but most of all in Isabel de Greilly."

"No," said Eustace, "whatever are the light shadows of defect, which may for a while obscure the beauty of her character, I will not think thus of her. She is like those bright crystals, in which the slightest specks by contrast show the stronger. My Isabel can never be a wanton."

"Your Isabel!" reiterated the Prior, contemptuously, "Sir Gracien's Isabel! Sir Equitan's Isabel! every body's Isabel! She is the betrothed wife of the Count's son, her own consent is given, and look how she demeans herself. One hour she is in secret conference with this Poursuivant D'Amour, at another she is closeted with you, whilst he but waits without the door a second meeting. Oh! Eustace, can I thus behold you rushing headlong on ruin, without stretching forth a friendly hand to save you? Remember the Count! think you he would deign thus to offer council where he may com-

mand? And will you madly sacrifice his favour to follow a girl who will lead you on like those deceptive lights, that guide the unwary traveller to destruction. Leave a vain pursuit, forget a boyish passion: and should this idle love, still lull you with the music of its voice, drown it in the loud clarion that rings the peal to arms. You are designed by the favour of De Foix to head some enterprise that shall crown you with honour; do not, therefore, at such a time as this, be found backward in the path of duty."

"Never," said Eustace, "shall my arm be wanting when it can wield a lance to serve the Count. No, Prior, had I a hope (but that I have not), it would be founded on the attempt to do some bold and dangerous act, to prove how dear I prize the interests of De Foix. Could I but trace the origin of my unhappy birth!—I have often dreamed it might be proved I was not the base-born peasant men repute me. Had I but noble blood to plead in favour of my suit, perhaps even the Count, who loves me, would rather bestow fair Isabel on one of her own choice, than on his son who cares not for her."

“ How apt,” replied Philip, “ is the spirit of youth to fashion circumstances by its own hopes ! Alas ! it is well known that the mystery of your birth was none with the charitable Countess, when she, in secret, brought you to the notice of her lord. Do you madly wish to fathom this mystery, only to have it proved with greater certainty, that you are but what you are reputed, the low-born child of charity, fostered and reared by the bounty of adoption ? Think you that the Count would ever listen to such a suit for his own niece, the destined bride of his son ! No, he would crush you, as the snake he had warmed into life within his bosom, and who had thus dared to dart its ingrate tongue, to sting its noble benefactor. But were this possible, I tell you once again, that Isabel, who now suffers you to follow her (knowing how fruitless is your love) to gratify a vain and idle mind, would herself despise you, and laugh to see the full-blown bubble of your hopes, raised by the breath of youthful folly, burst, and vanish into air.”

“ I am indeed most wretched !” exclaimed Eustace, who, unable longer to struggle with

his feelings, spoke in a tone of the deepest dejection; “ I am humbled even to the dust, scorned by the world, reproached for the misfortunes of my birth: what have I left but my integrity and trust in God? these I will still preserve. Let ruin come then, since it is inevitable. I had no hope of Isabel, I have long felt that the hour would come when I must resign her; but I was not prepared to resign her thus. The thought of her purity, of her noble nature; and that she felt a sympathy for those sufferings she could not alleviate, would have sustained me through the trial. This thought I will preserve to the last; nothing but herself, but her own act, shall ever shake my firm opinion of her worth. I have looked up to Isabel in life, as I would to a bright star that guided me, although beyond our sphere; whose light was mine but by reflection, and which I fondly hoped would still shine bright and effulgent, till I fixed upon it my last gaze in death; and better, far better were a thousand deaths, than the thought that Isabel was false.”

“ Alas,” said the Prior, in a subdued voice,

“ would to Heaven that I, my son, could view her with a lover’s eye, to think her true and holy as she seems to you. I but pity your weakness, and I would strive to cure it. Like the skilful leech, who probes the wound, before he heals it, I would now make it bleed apace, to save you from its mortal danger. Yet still, in pity to your feelings, I will do nothing rashly. Remember but the counsels of your friend, and till I have certain proof to show you the falsehood of this Lady Isabel, I will not name her more. Be cautious, trust not her blandishments, think upon the Count, wreck not, for the folly of a moment, the fair promise of your future years. Be prudent, and above all do not trust your reason to the sorcery of beauty’s charm. Let not fair words beguile you. Confide in me, I am your friend—farewell.”

The Prior left the unhappy youth to the company of his own distracted thoughts. The seeds of jealousy, as we have before observed, had long been lurking within the bosom of Eustace, and the follies of Isabel had greatly assisted their growth. Eustace, like

most persons who are of an easy unsuspicuous nature, was but too susceptible of those impressions which fostered his own propensities. Thus the artful remarks and insinuations of Prior Philip, and his bold assertions respecting the levity of Isabel, (unfortunately but too well sanctioned by her own thoughtless conduct) made a deeper impression upon the mind of Eustace than he was himself either aware of or willing to admit.

There is nothing, perhaps, more painful than the conviction of the worthlessness of one we have long loved, and considered as possessed of every excellency. To find such a being false, creates so painful, so humiliating a feeling, that we turn from it with trembling anxiety, and often with the fixed resolve not to believe it true. We would in some instances sooner continue to be deceived, than convinced of a truth so dreadful in its nature. And even when convinced, rather than suppose our situation singular, we would seek no other support to our wounded pride, than to lay the blame on human

nature, and at once conclude that all mankind must be equally false and deceitful.

Eustace, when thus artfully led to suspect Isabel, experienced the truth of these remarks in their fullest force, and after giving way to a thousand various and distracting thoughts, at length resolved, that either there was no truth on earth, or that Isabel de Greilly could not deceive ; and that nothing but the most glaring conviction should ever shake his opinion of her sincerity and worth.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE BANQUET.

Innocence shall make
False accusation blush, and tyranny
Tremble at patience. SHAKESPEARE.

BEFORE we take more particular notice of the vigil of arms, which Eustace was now keeping in the church of the Friars Minor of Orthes, preparatory to his receiving the honour of knighthood, it may not be amiss to say something of the rank and office of a knight, by creation; a rank very different in ancient times from that into which it has degenerated in modern days, when certain respectable aldermen, who have risen to civic honours by successful traffic, are often, upon the presentation of an address, metamorphosed from simple Mr. so and so, who kept shop in the city, into Sir James, Sir John, and Sir Harry, and who return home laden with

“blushing honours,” fully qualified to “make any Joan a lady.”

In ancient times, knighthood was the reward of merit, and as such, it was indeed an honour ; never obtained till the person upon whom it was conferred had undergone all the necessary severe and preparatory exercises, and whose conduct was as free from unworthy principles as from the imputation of cowardice. The simple knight, or knight bachelor, bore only a pennon, and had the command of a certain number of men at arms. The knight banneret, as the title implied, bore a banner, and was one who raised troops at his own charge for the service of his prince. All knights possessed the privilege of creating other knights : a power frequently exercised upon the eve of battle.

Before receiving the honour of knighthood, it was necessary that the person who obtained it should serve a certain time as an esquire, and that he should have attained the age of twenty-one years, no youth being admitted a member of chivalry before that period, unless by the especial favour of his lord or prince.

The character of knighthood was held so honourable, that kings were ambitious to obtain it; an instance is recorded of the young monarch Charles the Sixth of France, who was so desirous to buckle on his spurs, that he could not rest in peace till he was knighted. Some great princees received the honours of the order, even at the font during infancy, in the presence of their royal parents.

It is unnecessary to enumerate what were considered the particular qualities belonging to chivalry, because knighthood, and whatever is held most sacred, honourable, and worthy amongst men, were deemed synonymous. The simple word *knight* was used to express them all. The distinction in which the knights were held by all classes of society is well known; they were every where received as persons who might claim as their privilege the welcome of honour and hospitality. At all feasts they were the most distinguished guests; and to them, on such occasions, was appropriated the most costly presents, such as large sums of money, splendid

mantles lined with ermine or minever, costly stuffs, armour, horses, pearls, and precious metals.

The female sex ever received them with marked attention, and seldom did a knight venture the dangers of the tournament, without bearing with him a sleeve, a scarf, a hood, or a jewel, as a token from some fair hand to decorate his helmet in the lists. The ladies also would frequently assist in arming the knight for combat, and sometimes embroidered the device upon his pennon, or the emblazonments of his surcoat; and many thought it preferable that their lover should die a cavalier in the field, than live without that distinction ignobly free from danger. Jouvencal includes knighthood as one of the three orders of the state; denominating the church as the head, chivalry as the arms, and the citizens, mechanics, &c. as the inferior parts of the body.

Such was the honourable rank of a knight in ancient times; but if he shared largely in all those possessions and privileges which constitute

whatever is most desirable in human life, he shared equally its dangers, its vicissitudes, and its difficulties. He was bound to take up arms in the defence of all the oppressed and innocent, who might call on him for his assistance. He was to shun no danger, and was expected to brave all climates and all seasons, whilst engaged in his profession. His days often harassing, and his nights houseless; he felt the extremities of heat and cold, of hunger and thirst; and however great the spoils he might occasionally win in battle, if taken prisoner, he frequently was reduced to ruin by the enormous ransom that his victor sometimes demanded as the purchase of his freedom.

Nothing can be more strikingly characteristic of the sacred observance in which a knight held his word of honour, than the circumstance of his person being generally set at liberty upon giving a simple promise that he consented to pay the ransom demanded, and would convey it to his opponent on the earliest opportunity. Froissart relates a curious instance of this nature, when he tells us that the young Duke

of Gueldres, upon being taken prisoner by a squire named Arurant, was conveyed to a distant town; but the squire finding that a large body of men at arms were coming to rescue his noble prisoner, he thought it unsafe to remain where he was: he therefore gave the duke present liberty, upon his passing *his word as a knight* that he would return to captivity at a certain strong castle Arurant named, where the squire purposed going to secure his prisoner.

The duke pledged his word, and though he was rescued in perfect safety, and arrived at Konisberg, he instantly returned to the captivity of the fortunate squire, who afterwards received a large sum stipulated for his ransom from the states.

The knight was bound to defend the person, the honour, the fortunes, and the good name of the lady to whom he was devoted: so that even if she had done what was amiss, and still persisted in declaring her innocence, the knight was obliged to take up arms in her behalf. A remarkable instance of this nature is also mentioned by Froissart, who has detailed the cir-

cumstances in a most lively and interesting manner, describing the combat and all the proceedings. It is the trial of battle between James le Gris and John de Carogne, upon the wife of the latter accusing the former of having dis- honoured her during the absence of her husband. And although it was proved that the accused person was seen seventy miles from the place where she resided, four hours after the time alleged by the lady for the commission of the crime; yet as a doubt remained in favour of her assertion, and as she maintained its truth, the parliament of Paris referred the cause to judicial combat, and the husband, Sir John de Carogne, was obliged to tilt at Paris with James le Gris for life or death. Had he failed in con- quering James, the lady was to have been burnt alive upon the spot, whilst her lord was hanged in her presence.

Froissart relates many instances of knights who offered combat, for no other cause than that of breaking a lance in honour of their lady for the love they bore her, or for the fame of her beauty. Some of these bold adventurers lost

their lives in the attempt. So interesting, indeed, is the subject of ancient chivalry, that it offers a wide field for discussion and remark, far beyond the proposed limits of the present work. Suffice it therefore to observe, that a knight in former times was held in the same light in which we now consider the character of a perfect gentleman; as one made up of honour, courtesy, and benevolence: to which the knight superadded the qualities and exercises of a warrior.

Before the day arrived on which the youth was received as a member of the body of chivalry, he was obliged to keep the vigil of arms, unless upon occasions of emergency; as on the eve of a battle, or immediately after a victory, when preparatory ceremonials were necessarily dispensed with. This vigil of arms was a sacred preparation; it was calculated to make a deep impression upon the mind of the individual, and was also considered symbolic of the profession in which he was about to engage. For some time previous to the day of knighthood, the young man was admonished to attend the reading of homilies on moral and religious subjects. “Nights

passed in prayer (says St. Palaye), the sacraments of penance, confession, and of the Eucharist, received with the utmost devotion; bathings, which signified the purity of manners necessary in the state of chivalry, and white habits, in imitation of the Neophytes, or new converts, as another symbol of the same purity; all these duties of preparation were to be performed in the most devout manner by the youth previous to his being armed."

For several nights he was also obliged to watch his arms, which were laid by the high altar in the church or chapel near his residence. This ceremony was called the *vigil of arms*; and he was expected to employ himself during the time of his vigil in prayer and devout meditation, for the better ensuring his success in that profession, which was considered as peculiarly acceptable, and next to the church in the favour of Heaven. During the vigil of arms, the young man was sometimes attended by a priest or sponsor, and he was sometimes alone. He was always attired on the occasion in a dress composed of white garments; and the lord or knight

who was to dub or create him a member of the body of chivalry, was considered as his sponsor from the moment he commenced the ceremony.

Eustaeē, upon the evening of that day, so fraught with painful effects upon his feelings, was to keep this vigil (for the last time previous to being knighted) in the church of the Friars Minor of Orthes. After his anxious interview with Isabel de Greilly, and his still more anxious conference with the Prior, he felt little disposed to join the company at the banquet. Still he could not, without exciting the surprise of the Count, wholly abstain from it. He therefore joined the party, but not till De Foix had taken his seat at the board; when he glided into the hall, and endeavoured, by mixing in the throng of young knights and squires, to avoid the particular notice of any one.

As he glanced his eye around, he perceived the Prior seated near the Count. Sir Evan de Foix stood on the right hand, and carved the meats which were set before his father at the table; whilst Sir Gracien, and three other knights, brought and removed these meats, and

the dishes of gay and fanciful devices that were served up. Sir Equitan, Poursuivant d'Amour, sat between the Lady Jane of Boulogne and Isabel de Greilly; the old Countess de la Karasse and Sir Espaign du Lyon, formed the rest of the company who were honoured by being admitted to the board of the Count. Several long tables, extending the one below the other, reached to the very extremity of the hall; these were crowded with knights, squires, and ladies, each elegantly attired; for the approaching festival and tournament had rendered the court of Orthes more than usually brilliant.

At the moment Eustace entered, the minstrels were playing one of those harmonious airs, that so peculiarly delighted their lord. The hall was splendidly illuminated with torches and waxen tapers, and hung with the richest tapestry, festooned above with flowers; whilst silver vases, placed at certain intervals, presented the treasures of summer in her choicest flowers. The tables were covered with gold and silver plate. In addition to this the gay and gaudy attire of the heralds and minstrels, dressed in cloth of

gold, produced that lively effect which cannot fail to exhilarate the mind of youth when free from the anxieties of care.

But upon the mind of Eustace it had a contrary effect; every thing around him seemed to rejoice the heart, whilst his alone was wretched. “Alas!” said he, “Why am I here? This place is but a mockery to me; it is like the decorated altar to the victim who is there to be the sacrifice. O humble, but thrice happy lot of the poor and needy! who have peace within their bosom: far better is the thatched roof that shelters tranquil poverty, than the palace which covers with its silken hangings the aching brow of care.”

As Eustace pronounced these words in a low and almost inaudible voice, he was surprised by observing that the Franciscan (who seemed to take no part in the entertainment) was standing alone, and near him: his cowl was thrown over his head, and it so shaded his countenance, that his features could not be distinctly observed. “Poor boy,” exclaimed the monk, “you are indeed the victim; and these white robes in

which you are decked, look like the garments proper for the sacrifice. I pity you."

"These garments, holy man," replied Eustace, "I wear as becoming my occasion; for I am this night to complete my vigil of arms."

"I know it," said the Franciscan, "and shortly will they serve to array you for the tomb; you are the victim of treachery."

Eustace started: "Holy Mary!" he exclaimed, "what is it you tell me! But, no; I am too poor, too humble, too despised to be the victim of any treachery, but such as may arise from my own follies."

"And now you add to them," continued the Franciscan; "you leave the humble state in which nature designed you to be happy, for the empty fame and the peril of arms."

"I know well, reverend man," said Eustace, "that it is the business of your calling to condemn all worldly toils, such as we term those of honour and of fame; to point the more tranquil and certain path to heaven, through the peaceful walk of the cloistered monk."

"And think you," replied the Franciscan,

“that is all the duty of our calling? Learn, young man, to judge aright; the path of heaven is only direct when it follows the beacon light that should guide the steps of man, to assist his fellow-traveller on the way. I have no time to lose; I would save you from destruction. Nay, think not my words are light; I am not one of those who let fly the shaft at random to fall without an aim. Once more, I repeat that I would save you—save you from treachery—from destruction.”

“Oh heavens!” exclaimed Eustace, “where will my sorrows find their close! Alas! I know not whom in this world I have offended, that any one should seek my ruin and destruction: yet there is an awful solemnity about your manner, and in your holy calling, that makes me give credit to your words, else I should be loth to heed them. Tell me, then, what is the danger that awaits me, and how I may avoid it.”

“Not here,” said the Franciscan; “not here; meet me to-night at Calvary, by the church of the Friars Minor, in Orthes. Remember the hour of twelve at Calvary; there will I meet you.”

“ I will obey you,” replied Eustace, in a low and agitated voice. He had scarcely spoken these words, when the Franciscan suddenly quitted him; and, slowly pacing the hall, he placed himself near the person of the Count de Foix, where he stood in silent attention to what was passing. At this moment Sir Gracien poured from a golden flagon a goblet of wine, which he then tasted, and advancing towards his father, to whom he was to present the cup, he was about kneeling at his feet to offer it, when Sir Gracien’s foot slipped from the step of the dais, and the goblet and its contents fell to the ground. The Count smiled: “ How !” he exclaimed, “ why, this was ill offered, Sir Gracien, and you are yet an unskilful cup-bearer; but where is Eustace? for it is he who was wont to serve to me the cup of repose. Where is Eustace?”

Sir Gracien, who seemed much discomposed at finding the wine had fallen upon his gay attire, hastily retired from the company; and no sooner had the Count made this inquiry for his young favourite, than it was re-echoed by his obsequious attendants, and, “ Where is Eustace ?”

sounded through the hall. Eustace endeavoured to assume a composed air, and advancing towards a buffet of state that was placed near the dais, he took from beneath a napkin of silver tissue a golden flagon that had been hitherto untouched, and taking from the same shelf of the buffet another cup, he opened a comfit box, which contained spices, and after throwing in a small quantity of spice he poured out the wine: “This,” said Eustace to the Prior, as he advanced towards the dais, “is the hippocras * that I am wont to give to my lord;” and gracefully kneeling at the feet of the Count, he offered the cup to his benefactor: in doing so, his hand trembled with emotion, and he cast his dejected eyes upon the ground. “How!” said De Foix, “how is this! thy hand can so ill present the cup, that its contents are like to follow those of Sir Gracien’s. Why, what ails thee, boy? look up.”

Eustace obeyed: “Gracious Heaven!” con-

* Hippocras mixed with spices was often given at night to lords and princes, as the draught of repose: it was also a favourite beverage of the period.

tinned the Count, “ art thou ill, my child? thine eyes are haggard, and thy cheek is pale. Should such an aspect be the harbinger of the honours that await thee on the morrow? Speak, tell me, Eustace, what is it thus affects thee?”

“ Nothing, my lord,” replied Eustace, in evident confusion, “ Nothing; or it may be that—that—”

“ That what?” said the Count; “ tell me what has happened?”

Eustace was wholly unable to reply; and he stood before the Count silent and motionless. De Foix looked astonished, and still held the cup, as if unconscious of its use, when the Prior turning to him, softly whispered, “ My lord, Eustace has not tasted of the contents of the goblet; to-night that part of his duty is omitted.”

“ True,” said the Count; “ but the hand of a faithful servant can offer nothing ill to his lord; I know his loyalty, and I fear not to trust him.”

“ Oh, my lord,” exclaimed Sir Evan de Foix, boldly, “ forbear to drink, the cup may be mortal to you; there is something more in this than common. Here, Eustace, first taste of the cup

you have presented to my noble father; you have some motive for this omission of your duty."

Eustace started, at these words, from his motionless position; the blood that had before forsaken his cheek, at once rushed back to it, in a full torrent, and overspread his countenance: he stood with a proud and erect mien; the base suspicion which had so cruelly and so falsely implied that Eustace could be guilty of treachery to the Count, at once aroused every latent feeling of his character; he was no longer the humbled, the dejected Eustace; conscious integrity made him bold; and, with a voice at once firm and commanding, that well accorded with the dignity of his aspect and demeanour, he calmly took the cup, and thus addressed Sir Evan, his ungenerous accuser—

“ The infamous suspicion by which you, Sir Evan de Foix, have dared to accuse me, merits alone my contempt: here I stand in the presence of the Count, my friend, my benefactor; to the commands of my Lord de Foix in all things I submit my life, my fortunes; but for your base suspicion, your test, which bids me

drink of the cup to vindicate my innocence, I scorn it. I will not stoop to such a vindication. Here is the cup ; the wine is pure and harmless as the spring that issues from the bosom of its native rock. I need but quaff it, to prove the baseness of the slander ; but I hold in contempt so cheap a vindication. Let guilt fear suspicion, innocence can brave it. Thus, then, and thus I scorn the test (continued Eustace, as he dashed the contents of the goblet upon the ground) and now, Sir Evan de Foix, I pledge myself before the face of Heaven, in the name of the Count, as his liege man and vassal, to prove my innocence by the way of arms. There is my glove, let him who dares to doubt me take it up, and may Heaven and the Virgin maintain the rightful cause ! My soul I give to God, my body to the test.”

“ I take thy gauntlet up, proud youth,” said Sir Evan de Foix : “ if thy former conduct excited suspicion, thy refusal of the test confirms it ; but such insolence and bold presumption shall not pass unpunished ; I will meet thee in the lists.”

“ Forbear,” exclaimed the Franciscan, “ forbear ; my Lord de Foix, to you I make my appeal, that this challenge should not go forward. Eustace (now under a heavy penance of the church to purge his soul from sin, before he receives the order of a knight) cannot, by the laws of chivalry, throw down his gauntlet, nor accept a challenge. To you, Count de Foix, therefore, I appeal ; and I charge you, in the sacred name of Him who has delegated to you your earthly power, and to whom you must render its account, I charge you do your duty, and on the instant forbid this combat.”

The Count looked astonished, and alternately cast his eyes upon Eustace and upon the Franciscan. “ Your speech is bold and strange,” he exclaimed ; “ and who are you, who thus presume to dictate to De Foix ? But yet your words speak truth.

“ Eustace, take up the glove, and you, Evan de Foix, learn more temper. Eustace, your conduct, which every one here present has this night witnessed, excites my surprise, I will not say suspicion ; for so true do I believe you, and

so firmly did you prefer to wager your life in battle, to the simple test of drinking of the cup, that I cannot suspect a breast so bold and daring could harbour treason. And when I think upon my love to you, it seems impossible that you could wish to harm me, for my death would rather make your ruin than your advancement. Yet all things considered, this strange demeanour and agitated offer of the cup, this were enough to alarm a mind less disposed than mine to think you honest. And it is somewhat singular too, that the holy Franciscan should thus interpose in an affair where my safety was the subject of debate, and that he should seek to prevent a combat where the judgment of Heaven was in direct appeal. I know not, Eustace, what this Franciscan is to you, yet let him beware; but for his sacred habit, that protects him, we would examine narrowly the pretensions of a man who is thus bold in teaching us our duty."

" My lord," said Eustace, " I know not the reverend man; I have never seen his face, for, I understand, he has vowed never to uncover it before man till the purpose of his vow to visit the

Holy Land is accomplished. I have occasionally listened to the pious discourses that he has addressed to us since his arrival at Orthes; I may say that I know him but in his public conferences."

"Or, perhaps," observed Sir Evan de Foix, "in his private conferences in a public assembly; for, if I mistake not, but a few minutes before, you, Eustace, took the flagon, from which you poured the hippocras, the Franciscan was in earnest conference with you under the oriel window, within the most obscure recess of this hall."

"How!" exclaimed the Count, "is this true, Eustace?"

"It is, my lord," replied Eustace, "the Franciscan there addressed me."

"And what was the theme of your discourse, young man," said Prior Philip; "for, doubtless, a conference with so holy a brother of St. Francis must be of advantage to all who may but hear it repeated."

Eustace was again agitated; he could not repeat the fearful warnings of the Franciscan

respecting his own safety, and he scorned to stoop to falsehood ; he therefore replied, but with evident confusion, “ The discourse was but of little concern to any one but myself.”

“ The friends who love you, gentle youth,” said Philip, “ share in whatever concerns you ; and as the mind of my Lord de Foix has been somewhat disturbed by the unfortunate events of this evening, it is your duty to afford him every satisfaction within your power, and this may clear your hitherto fair name from the least shadow of suspicion.”

“ True,” said the Count ; “ and as you but now, Eustace, declared you would submit to my commands in all things, I desire you to repeat to me the subject of discourse between this holy man and yourself.”

“ My lord,” replied Eustace, “ I would entreat you to forbear the question. The subject of our discourse was not for the general ear.”

“ What !” exclaimed the Count, and he frowned as he spoke, “ again mysterious ! Say, what is this ? Art thou only obedient to me in

profession, and not in act? Nay, I command thee speak the truth, and on the instant."

Eustace cast his eyes up to Heaven, as if internally ejaculating a prayer for some direction how to act in a moment so fraught with difficulty. He looked again pale and disordered; at length he said, "My lord, if I must speak, I conjure you let it be to yourself in private; and first permit me to address but a few words to the Franciscan."

"Why, this is some unfathomable mystery!" exclaimed the Count. "You awaken in my mind a thousand suspicions that else had slumbered. What am I to think? into what dark labyrinth of terrible conjecture would you not force me? You have your choice to speak direct, or else to leave me to my own interpretation of the strange character of your words and actions. I know not this Franciscan. Who is he? why comes he here?"

"*You* not know me, Count de Foix?" exclaimed the Franciscan, who advanced and stood immediately facing the lord he thus addressed. "*You* know me not? Nay, think again; and if

you can forget me, there is one word I could utter that should awaken your remembrance, even were you sinking into the forgetfulness of death. When I saw you last, you were not thus unmindful. I saw you upon the eve of St. Nicholas, in the church of the Friars Minor. Now do you remember me? now do you know me? now will you question Eustace?"

The countenance of De Foix became white as death at these words: his hands, which had before been extended upon the arms of the chair of state in which he sat, dropt motionless by his side; he breathed short; and after a strong effort to subdue and conceal the powerful workings of his feelings, he hastily said, "I do remember something of thee, when thou didst address to me a rhapsody of words, upon hearing of a vision respecting the blessed St. Nicholas, which had much troubled my mind."

The Franciscan's countenance could not be observed beneath the shade of his projecting cowl that overhung his face; the mouth alone could be imperfectly perceived: his lips seemed to smile contemptuously at these words of De

Foix, but he did not reply to them. Whatever might have been the nature of the Count's connexion with the Friar, it was evident that the recognition of it had greatly agitated his mind. The Count endeavoured to pass it off as well as he could; and lest his agitation should be still more apparent if he instantly dismissed Eustace, he continued to converse with him.

“ Since,” he said, “ the repetition of what may have passed between yourself and the Franciscan would be painful to you in public, Eustace, I will grant your request; and at a more convenient time I will demand the explanation, as you desire, in private. In the interval, let me give you this caution for your own security; as I doubt not your thoughts and actions are true and loyal to me, so let your conduct be open and direct, that you may put to silence the low, but dangerous, whispers of suspicion. And remember that the youth in whom I trust, I expect should be as faithful and obedient to me in his acts which are unseen, as he is in those that are as open to observation as the light of Heaven.”

Eustace, who truly loved the Count, and was really desirous of obeying him, felt these words as a just and deserved reproach for his secret and unfortunate attachment to Isabel. His conscience smote him, and he sighed deeply. He cast his eyes upon the ground, and again raising them, the beautiful object of his affection, who at this moment looked less gay and brilliant, but not less lovely than ever, met his view. Eustace, whilst he gazed upon Isabel, felt some relief from the pain of self-accusation. "For who," thought he, "could have passed his life as I have done beneath the same roof with Isabel de Greilly, and could avoid loving her?" He looked again, and the eyes of Isabel met his; they spoke with more than ordinary expression the feelings of her mind, but she quickly turned them away; and as if displeased with her own involuntary emotion, and anxious to hide it from observation, she commenced an unmeaning dialogue with Sir Equitan upon the first subject that came into her thoughts.

The Count continued speaking. "Eustace, to-night you hold the last vigil of your arms;

to-morrow you will receive from my hand, as the sponsor of your knighthood, the sword that shall inaugurate you as a member of the order of chivalry. May Heaven and the Virgin prosper you in all honour as a worthy knight."

"Oh, my dear lord," said Eustace, (overcome by the manner in which De Foix had dismissed his late suspicions, and had so generously returned to the subject of his advancement), "how can I ever cease to love and honour you? You have sheltered my childhood, trained me up to virtue and to arms; and even now, when many a less noble mind would have dwelt upon unkind thoughts, you seek to do me good. Oh may my sword be ever devoted to the cause and the interests of him who has so generously bestowed it."

"Ay," said Prior Philip, "may it ever be so; and may no light follies of thy unripe years, by their effects unnerve that manly arm. And may thy thoughts, (which to thy acts are like the fountain's source that supplies its several springs and sends them forth,) may they be ever just and obedient to thy noble benefactor."

“ I trust, Father Philip,” replied Eustace, “ that I shall never be ungrateful to my Lord de Foix.”

“ I know thou wilt not,” said the Count; “ I have ever trusted thee, and even now I am willing to confide in thy integrity.”

“ Such a confidence,” observed the Prior, still addressing Eustace, “ can be alone repaid by that devoted gratitude, which would not scruple to offer any sacrifice, however painful, that might be necessary to thy lord. Eustace, let the goodness of thy benefactor make thee tremble to disobey him but in thought. And remember that thy entire submission to his will is the best and the only return thy inexperienced youth can offer for his kindness.”

Eustace perfectly understood the full meaning of these words of the artful Prior, and yet he felt they were harsh and almost cruel. That Philip should seize upon a moment when his mind was so powerfully affected by contending feelings, to remind him he must for ever resign Isabel de Greilly, seemed to Eustace at once the effect of a rigid morality and a stern temper.

He looked mournfully upon Isabel, and turning towards Philip, he said in a voice of cold acquiescence, "Prior, I trust that I know my duty."

"Son," replied Philip, "then I trust that you will practise it."

"Come, come," said the Count, rising, "leave this subject, Philip; you shall school Eustace at some other time."

"You holy men think all occasions meet for your discourse, but in sooth they are somewhat out of place in the banquet hall. And see the company rise, they are forming into parties for the dance. The minstrels too play a sweet air. Come, Eustace, you shall join the revellers. Here, Jane of Boulogne, Sir Evan awaits your hand to lead you to the dance. But where is Sir Gracien? why is he absent? Yet since it is so, here, Eustace, lead out our fair niece Isabel, and be her partner for the ball."

Eustace advanced, and offered his hand to Isabel, she received it in silence, and notwithstanding all the recent painful occurrences, at the thrilling emotion Eustace experienced upon touching the fair hand of the beautiful Isabel,

he forgot at that moment every thing, but the consciousness of being near the adored object of his admiration. A sudden glow of pleasure filled his heart, and animated his countenance.

So quick, so capable of transition, so like the sunshine of an April day, are the lively sensations that convey pleasure to the bosom of youth. A few years more, and the charm which constitutes them is for ever broken. For with what painful experience do those few years instruct us ! how fully do they teach that disappointment and sorrow make up the sum of human life, and that nothing is permanent on this side the grave but principles of Christian virtue ! These add their radiance to the noontide of our happiest years, are not obscured in their decline, and will still light us on our way, like a star of guidance, when the clouds of age are gathering round us, and we need a sure direction through all the storms and perils of our worldly pilgrimage.

Jane of Boulogne was obliged to submit to receive Sir Evan de Foix as her partner. Eustace was about to lead out Isabel, when Prior Philip, who had no desire that he should do so,

suddenly interposed. “ My Lord,” said he, addressing the Count, “ pardon my presumption, but Eustace is to-night to keep the last vigil of his arms, and as he is under an enjoined penance of the church till such time as he becomes a knight, it were as unseemly that he should lead out a damsel in the dance, as it would be that he should give a challenge.”

“ You are right, Prior,” replied the Count; “ we must therefore deprive you, Eustace, of the fair hand of our cousin, and as Sir Gracien is still absent from the hall, I would entreat you, Sir Equitan, to become the partner of the Lady Isabel.”

At these words Sir Equitan gallantly seized the hand of the lovely Isabel de Greilly, and bowing to the Count, he led her to the farther end of the hall. The disappointed Eustace, who this evening seemed destined to experience every mortification, remained by the side of the Count in silent dejection.

The tables were now removed, and the green rushes swept away from that part of the hall appropriated for the ball. The minstrels played

gaily to the light motion of the dancers' feet; every one seemed cheerful and animated, every one seemed happy, but Eustace. His eyes were riveted upon the extremity of the hall, where they followed the elegant figure of Isabel, and as they every now and then lost sight of her, amidst the mazes of the dance, still the scarf which she wore about her shoulders lightly floated in the air, and arrested his attention; he envied that very scarf which thus could hover round her, and was privileged never to be absent from her; so fantastic and so wandering are the thoughts of a lover.

Whilst Eustace was thus engaged in contemplating the gay scene before him, and in gazing upon his beloved Isabel, he forgot every thing but the object of his affections; his vigil of arms, his appointment with the Franciscan, were alike unheeded, till, during a pause of the music, he distinctly heard the great bell of the castle strike twelve. Eustace started from his reverie, and remembering that he had already staid beyond the usual time of his return to the

vigil of arms in the church of the Friars Minor, (where he was also at midnight to meet the Franciscan at the Calvary in its cemetery) he resolved to delay no longer the moment of his departure.

Taking therefore a hasty leave of the Count, for the purpose, as he declared, of watching his arms, he walked to the extremity of the hall with the intention to leave it at the great entrance. As there was a much nearer way for his departure, by a small door near that part of the hall, where Eustace had been standing with De Foix, it is impossible to account for his giving himself the trouble to walk to the extremity of the hall for the mere purpose of quitting it, unless we recollect that it was there that Isabel de Greilly was engaged with the dancers.

At the moment Eustace reached the spot, the dancers were just returning to their seats: Sir Equitan and Isabel stood leaning against one of the large columns that supported the roof. Eustace in his way out was obliged to pass be-

hind this column, when the following remarkable words uttered by Sir Equitan roused his attention.

“ I would not have you trust any one, fair Isabel, at present, with the knowledge of it.”

“ Fear not,” said Isabel; “ when an affair so near my heart is in question, I can be secret as the grave: nothing shall be known till all is safe and prepared. Then I may throw off the mask, and prove that I only wore it upon an occasion of great necessity. You shall be happy, you have nothing to fear.”

Eustace (who had heard the first part of these words as he passed near the back of the column) had been induced almost involuntarily to remain there a moment, till the rush towards the door upon the conclusion of the dance had passed away. A thrilling interest occasioned by the utterance of words so remarkable, detained him a moment longer, till, recollecting that he was attending to a discourse not designed for his ear, he suddenly rushed from the spot, and left the ball with a quick and hurried step, as if he wished by the rapidity of his motion to fly from

the tormenting reflections which arose in succession to irritate and influence his mind. In like manner did he pass the great portal and the court-yard of the castle; he scarcely seemed to touch the ground. At length, having gained the open country between the castle, and the town of Orthes, he somewhat slackened his pace.

The night was calm and serene, and beautifully illuminated by the subdued light of the moon. To an agitated soul there is no external object capable of producing such soothing effects as a view of the face of nature. Whilst contemplating the vast and beautiful works of an almighty hand, we are insensibly led to compare them with the insignificance of our own existence. Amidst the immensity of creation we think how little is the space we occupy in this wide world, and that a few years, at the utmost, will make that little less. Yet how busily do we fill it up with the anxieties, the turmoils, the disorders of our own passions. We look to the face of nature, and there behold that all is calm, all tranquilly following the order of creation, dependent alone on God. All seems

to speak joy and harmony through the useful hours of the day, and to sleep peacefully at night beneath the favour of heaven.

But of all the objects in the natural world, however soothing their general character, nothing is so capable perhaps of tranquillizing our distracted thoughts as the fixed contemplation of water: so smooth, so fresh, so still in its appearance, yet possessing a sufficiency of gentle motion to keep up the idea of animation; now reflecting the passing cloud, or now sparkling with the long and silver rays of the moon; one wave propelling and succeeding another, with a soft and lulling sound. Eustace felt its effects, as he paused for a moment on the banks of the broad expanse of the Gave. The night was clear and serene: it might indeed be said, in the words of our own Shakespeare:

“ It is but the day light sick,
It looks a little paler, 'tis a day
Such as the day is when the sun is hid.”

The woods and surrounding hills were beautifully silvered, whilst every tower of the castle, every church or cottage in the neighbourhood,

was distinctly seen glittering in the light of the moon. Eustace looked upon one of these cottages that stood near the bank of the river. The beams of a taper spread through the window, and he heard from within the sweet and simple strains of a hymn to the Virgin, sung by its humble inhabitants. The contrast between their state of peaceful and pious enjoyment, and his own agitated feelings, struck forcibly upon his mind; and turning towards the Gave with folded arms, he leant upon a stump of a decayed tree, and contemplated its smooth waters.

“ Alas !” said Eustace, “ how like the life of man is the flow of thy busy and unceasing waves ! one murmurs on a while, and is succeeded by another, then sinks amidst the multitude, and is for ever lost to the view. Yet, oh how different from the passions that agitate mankind are thy clear waters ! They are content to follow their even course, as nature designed them ; whilst man is content with nothing as it is, with nothing as it ought to be. His wants are artificial, his refinements misery. And his affections, the best gift of his Creator, designed

as the noble source of his enjoyments ; they are tortured, or abandoned, or made to follow as only secondary in the train of his mere worldly possessions. 'Thy gifts, O Heaven ! are holy, pure, and sacred ! but how doth man abuse, how doth he contemn the order of thy creation, and let loose, as a mountain torrent, the wild and furious current of his passions, that overwhelms and destroys whatever is most virtuous and happy.'

Eustace wept. His mind had been so worked upon, so distracted, by the various emotions of the day, and, above all, by the extraordinary and mysterious words that he had accidentally heard dropt by Sir Equitan and Isabel, that he found a relief in tears from the painful and almost suffocating sensation which oppressed him. He thought of Isabel with feelings " more of sorrow than of anger ;" for Eustace was too much overcome, too deeply hurt, to be capable of the energy of anger ; he could only weep ; he could only think how dearly he had loved, and how entirely he had trusted. Could Isabel thus cruelly deceive him ? Could she abandon the

choice of her long and early affections for the new favourite of yesterday? “No, no,” thought Eustace, as the apprehension darted through his mind, “such cruelty could hardly exist in human nature, far less in the bosom of Isabel de Greilly: I will not believe it; but yet what words! and then her anxiety to protect Sir Equitan from danger at the tournament, the gift of the clasp, their meeting, her evident confusion, her refusal to explain the cause to me, the Prior’s suspicions; and, above all, those extraordinary words! Gracious heaven! what, what am I to think?”

Eustace leant upon his arms, with his head between his hands, pressing them hard upon his forehead. He wept, and even sobbed with anguish. The smooth face of the waters, that had for a while tranquillized his feelings, now was unheeded. He closed his eyes; he looked but upon the terrible image presented by his own imagination, and suggested to his mind by the thought of the possibility of Isabel’s falsehood: he looked and shuddered.

At this moment the full chorus of voices raised

by the neighbouring cottagers, as they concluded their evening hymn to the Virgin, struck upon his ear, and he started from his fixed position.

“ Gracious heaven !” he exclaimed, “ can these poor uneducated people thus pour forth their pious effusions to the holy mother of God, and I, who have been better taught, forget my duty, forget it in the remembrance of an earthly and unhappy affection ! What have I done that should render me thus wretched ? whom have I injured, whom have I offended ? whom have I offended but thee, oh ! my Father, my Creator ? An earthly object has occupied that fervour of affection which should be thine. Thou art the dispenser of justice, the parent of mercy, thus am I punished. Thou art jealous of the love of thy children ; thou hast said it, O my Father ! and thy words are immutable as the law of thy will. Still, still thou art merciful, and even now, when every worldly hope forsakes me, thou wilt hear, thou wilt protect me ; whilst I, like the prodigal, return but to my father’s house when all things else have abandoned me.”

Eustace dropt upon his knees at these words,

and, with clasped hands and raised eyes, he ejaculated a fervent prayer to his Creator, and concluded with an address to the Virgin, imploring her pity and protection. His orisons accomplished, he arose from the ground, and quitted the spot in a more composed state of mind than that in which he had first come to it. Thus did he experience, from the exercise of his religious duties, that internal comfort and support which can alone administer permanent consolation to the bosom of the afflicted.

As Eustace passed the cottage that had so much affected his feelings, he paused for a moment and sighed; and in that moment he thought, that had he remained in the lowly station in which he believed he was born, he might perhaps have been happier; “for an exalted station,” said Eustace, “is not always one of happiness: and whilst nature lies as open to the view of the vassal as to that of his lord, his lowly station leaves him free to enjoy it in security; for he is too poor for envy, and too insignificant for the tongue of malice: he may love his God, and enjoy all creation, if he be humble-minded, in peace, and

sleep soundly at night without a warder to keep the door."

These reflections had another good effect on Eustace ; they helped to humble his spirit : and as humility (the chief grace of a true Christian, although the rarest to be found) is the best calculated of all graces to assist us in bearing misfortune, so did it now assist Eustace in meeting his calamities with a firmer mind. He thought humbly of himself, and considered that if his afflictions were the allotment of Heaven as a punishment for sin, it was his duty to submit with silent acquiescence : to feel it as a chastisement, but not to sink under it in despair.

CHAPTER IX.

THE VIGIL OF ARMS.

The iron tongue of midnight hath told twelve.

SHAKESPEARE.

EUSTACE hastened towards the monastery of the Friars Minor of Orthes. It was in the church of that house he was to complete his vigil of arms ; it was in its cemetery at Calvary he was appointed to meet the Franciscan. The Calvary here mentioned stood, surrounded by cypress and yew trees, in a retired part of the churchyard. It was formed by a large cross, erected on the summit of a little mound of earth. The image of our Saviour, the size of life, carved in wood, was nailed upon the cross. The figures of the Virgin and the favourite disciple, of the same size and material, stood at the feet of the image. The earth surrounding the cross was strewed with

human skulls and bones ; whilst a single taper, inclosed within glass to prevent its being extinguished by the air, was kept burning day and night, upon the top of the cross.

It was here that many severe penances were performed by the zealous followers of the church of Rome ; it was here that the guilty, and sometimes the innocent breast, often poured forth their supplications in superstitious adoration, at the foot of the representation of Mount Calvary.

As Eustace advanced towards the spot, he observed a figure glide amongst the trees, and in the next moment it stood beneath the cross. When he had nearly gained the mount, he perceived the figure was wrapped in the black garments of a monk. Eustace doubted not that this was the Franciscan, and hastening towards him, with increased speed, “ Father !” he exclaimed, as he approached, “ I have been detained beyond the hour of our appointment ; but I could not leave the Count de Foix sooner, without exciting his suspicions ; and after what had passed, that might have been dangerous to us both : but oh ! with what emotions have I awaited the hour

of this secret conference, when a purpose of such import, yet so terrible, is to be made known to me!"

"If you expect such a purpose to be made known to you from me, young man," exclaimed the person Eustace had addressed, "your expectation will not be fulfilled; as I find, from your discourse, you have erroneously taken me for another."

"You are not, then, the Franciscan?" said Eustace, heedlessly.

"No," replied the stranger, "I am not of the order of St. Francis, although a monk."

Eustace started; and the thought of his own imprudence now first rushed with conviction upon his mind. He knew not what to say, or how to act; the hope that he was unknown to the person he had so unthinkingly addressed, was the only one in which he could confide. He feared to tarry, lest some word, some question, might ensue, that would betray him; yet he wished, if possible, to be made acquainted with the name of the stranger. Eustace hesitated; he feared to stay, and yet he lingered. As the monk turned

towards the cross, a ray of light from the taper that burned above, suddenly gleamed upon his countenance. Eustace thought it was a countenance (imperfectly as he caught this casual view of it) which he had before seen, yet he felt doubtful, and the monk drew his cowl still closer about his head, and bidding Eustace farewell, he slowly withdrew from Calvary.

Eustace remained for some time riveted to the spot, revolving in his mind the strange events of the evening, and anxiously expecting the arrival of the Franciscan; but no Franciscan appeared. At length he remembered that the time was so far spent, that it was absolutely necessary he should complete the vigil of arms in the church. With this intention he turned aside into the path that led to a small door-way which opened upon the west aisle, and of which he had the key, till his vigil should be finished.

The church of the Friars Minor of Orthes was an ancient gothic pile, of massive rather than elegant construction. The columns that supported the roof, and divided the aisles, were of an extraordinary magnitude, and the low

arched windows were filled with stained glass. The high altar, placed within the chancel at the east end, was richly decorated, and had been presented to the church by an ancestor of the present Count de Foix. The altar-table was covered with crimson velvet, embroidered with gold, and the Christ that stood upon it was a very ancient figure, carved in wood, and now black with age. The image was attired in silken embroidery, hung with jewels, and several small pieces of gold in the shape of a human heart: these were the offerings of various devotees.

Several reliques magnificently set in gold, and also decorated with jewels, were laid out upon the table, intermixed with silver vases containing flowers, and two missals, bound in velvet, and studded with golden clasps, were laid near the foot of the Christ. Behind the altar-table was placed the tabernacle that enclosed the host; this was entirely of wrought gold: and above was seen a small shrine composed of crystal, lapis lazuli, gold, and precious stones. This little shrine contained a piece of the true

cross brought from the Holy Land by one of the Counts de Foix.

It was in front of this altar that the arms of Eustace were placed. They rested upon a ferrum covered with white silk, and the golden sword with which he was to receive the honour of knighthood on the morrow, was extended upon the table. A few burning tapers faintly glimmered around the altar, whilst a more solemn and imposing light was seen reflected by the moon through the many-coloured portions of the painted glass, that threw their blue and sober rays upon the walls of the church, finely contrasted, and rendered yet more solemn by the total darkness of those parts of the interior where the light was intercepted by the broad and massive columns and altars dedicated to various saints.

Near the great east window of the church, and to the right of the high altar, appeared beneath a richly fretted and low gothic arch, the tomb and monumental effigy of Sir Peter Arnaut de Bearn, the late governor of the castle of Lourde, who had been placed in that situa-

tion by Edward the Black Prince, when he claimed the garrison and castle in right of his duchy of Aquitaine. The effigy was of white marble; it represented the deceased in a recumbent posture; the hands were raised in the attitude of prayer; the figure was fully armed, but wore only the basnet upon the head, which was supported by the helmet in place of a cushion. The countenance of this effigy, agreeably to the custom of the time, afforded a correct representation of that of the deceased person. The whole was beautifully executed by a skilful artist, and had been newly erected in the church, where masses were yearly said on the anniversary of his death, for the repose of the soul of Sir Peter Arnaut de Bearn.

Eustace entered the western aisle by the door we have before mentioned, and having carefully surveyed the church, and found no one in it, he dipped his hand in the holy water that stood near the great entry, and made the sign of the cross upon his breast. He then advanced towards the high altar, where he devoutly prostrated himself upon his knees and repeated the

particular prayers enjoined to be said by all those who were observing the vigil of arms. These acts of piety accomplished, Eustace arose, and slowly paced up and down the chancel before the altar where his arms had been placed.

He now endeavoured to compose his thoughts to serious meditation, as that was deemed one considerable part of the duty in which he was engaged; but the effort was vain: in spite of all his struggles his thoughts constantly wandered to the events of the past evening, nor could he dismiss Isabel one moment from his mind. Indeed, so much had her image engrossed his entire soul, that Eustace, in the hope to say it with fixed attention, had more than once repeated a prayer which her remembrance had disturbed in the midst of his first ejaculations. Eustace at length found all his efforts to dismiss these busy thoughts were vain; he no longer made them, and breathing a secret prayer that he might be forgiven this unwilling neglect of his duty, he gave himself up to his own reflections.

He thought upon Isabel, upon Sir Equitan,

the Prior, the Count, the stranger he had spoken to at Calvary, and, above all, at this moment, he considered the extraordinary conduct of the Franciscan, that he should appear to possess the knowledge of circumstances so important to his safety, express such a desire to communicate them, make an appointment, and then apparently abandon it; these were circumstances calculated to awaken his most serious thoughts. The curiosity he felt to be satisfied respecting them was intense and painful. He considered and re-considered every thing again and again, till he was lost in doubt and perplexity.

Whilst Eustace was thus occupied, the bell of the monastery of the Friars Minor tolled one. The sound was deep and solemn. It broke upon the stillness of night with that awful effect, the circumstances, the place, and the hour, were calculated to produce. Things that appear trifling, and pass unheeded during the busy occupation of the cheerful day, strike us with peculiar effect amidst the stillness, the silence, and the obscurity of the night. “The bell sounds one,” thought Eustace; “in another hour my vigil will be at

an end, and I shall not see this extraordinary man."

Eustace passed the low arch which contained the tomb of Sir Peter Arnaut de Bearn. At this moment the moon breaking forth in unclouded splendour, a ray of her light streamed through a window of the chancel that was principally filled with blue stained glass. The stream of light which derived its colour from the window through which it passed, shone full and direct upon the monument, and every feature of the effigy was distinctly seen. Eustace paused to contemplate it. The brow was manly but severe, and the whole countenance of a peculiar and marked character. It was such a countenance as is seldom seen; but being once observed, could never be forgotten.

Eustace was riveted to the spot. He thought he had never beheld a face that seemed to speak with so much expression the character of the mind. "What," said he, "must he have been when living, whose features, though in marble, can thus arrest attention? what must have been that soul which gave them animation? Yet that

is for ever fled ; and all that now remains of the body is this feeble record of its having once existed. What, then, is life ! what death ! Life, that fades away so soon for ever ; and death, that opens to the soul the gate of an eternal kingdom ! Oh life and death ! how are you both misnamed ! Far more, however, are you both misprised ! Men toil for the possessions of a moment ; they are anxious about the pleasures of a day ; but they reck not the things of eternity. Oh what a lesson doth this cold marble teach ! It is the image of death, who is now the victor of its original. What a lesson doth it speak to me ! Peace to the soul of him whose ashes rest beneath ; and though I should never again behold that countenance which has awakened such feelings in my mind, I will bear the remembrance of it to the last hour of my existence.”

Eustace, whilst he pronounced these words in a subdued tone of voice, thought he heard a slight rustling near him : he started, and immediately the sound was followed by a sigh. Eustace suddenly turned towards the spot whence the noise came : but who shall describe his sensa-

tions—what can speak his astonishment—when he distinctly beheld by the light of the moon that gleamed through the church, the same extraordinary countenance he had contemplated in the marble effigy, standing before him.

Eustace was speechless. The figure neither moved nor spoke, but gazed upon him with a fixed attention. Eustace, who was naturally of a bold and fearless spirit in the affairs and amidst the events of human life, felt overpowered and appalled by the apparition of another world, which he firmly believed now stood before him. Yet his bosom was guiltless; and, strongly armed by conscious innocence, the thought of why should he fear the visitation of the dead rushed into his mind with the force of conviction. “No,” thought he, “I will fear nothing but my God.”

These ideas passed, as it were, in a moment through his mind, and reanimated his sinking spirits. Still his heart beat quick, and his whole frame trembled, as he looked upon the awful being who stood before him. He made an effort to speak, but still his tongue denied utterance. He made a second effort, and thus addressed the

fearful apparition : “ Tell me, I conjure thee, in the name of the Almighty Father of the living and of the dead, who thou art, and what is the purpose of this awful visitation.”

“ Art thou, then, surprised to see me ? ” replied the being Eustace had addressed. “ Thou didst not meet me at the appointed hour at Calvary.”

“ Art *thou* then the Franciscan ? ” replied Eustace quickly.

“ Ay,” said the Friar; “ but wherefore this amazement ? I stole softly into the church, and glided near you in silence, lest you might not be alone. Why are you thus alarmed ? ”

“ Father,” replied Eustace, “ I never till this hour beheld your countenance without your cowl; for when at Orthes, you were wont to keep it close about your head, so that no one might distinctly see your features.”

“ That is true,” said the Franciscan, “ and I may have my reasons for it. But wherefore should the sight of it now cause such alarm ? ”

“ I am almost ashamed to tell you,” replied Eustace; “ but yet I will confess that but a mo-

ment before you entered the church, I had been contemplating the face of this effigy of Sir Peter Arnaut de Bearn; and judge how I was astonished, when, upon suddenly turning towards you, I beheld its exact resemblance in your own!"

The Friar remained silent for a few minutes, and took no farther notice of the circumstance. "But why," said he to Eustace, "why did you fail me at Calvary at the hour of twelve? A monk came to the spot to make his orisons as I lingered near it; his presence compelled me to retire; I dared not there await to meet you for prudent reasons."

Eustace excused himself by saying, that he had been detained at Orthes till a late hour by being near the Count de Foix, whose suspicions he feared to awaken if he had suddenly quitted the hall; but he did not mention his own incautious conduct upon meeting the stranger at Calvary. Indeed, at this moment he did not think of it; for the extraordinary and sudden appearance of the Franciscan, and his exact resemblance to the effigy of Sir Peter Arnaut de

Bearn, for the time wholly absorbed his thoughts; and he could yet scarcely convince himself that it was really the Franciscan, and a creature of this world, who stood before him.

The Franciscan, after a pause, again fixed his steadfast gaze upon Eustace, "Hast thou forgot," he said, "the purpose that now brings me to thee: dost thou remember it is one of import to thyself?"

"Father," replied Eustace, "I know well you told me, such it was, and I am impatient to learn its import."

"Dost thou believe my words?" continued the Friar.

"Ay, truly do I," said Eustace, "for I know not how it is, but there is that about thee, holy man, that makes me think thee true, and yet I tremble whilst I believe thy truth."

"Then," exclaimed the Franciscan, in a solemn and elevated voice, "then first swear, at the foot of this most sacred image, swear, that what I shall reveal to you this night, that what I shall instruct you must be done, you will keep secret as death, ay, silent as the grave, till such

time as I shall give you the sanction to reveal it. *Swear to fulfil the purpose I shall enjoin.*"

"Never," replied Eustace: "no never will I blindly bind myself by oaths so solemn, to the commission of an act to whose nature I am a stranger. Oh Heaven! think into what a gulf of sin and misery I might sink my soul!"

"Eustace," said the Franciscan, sternly, "would you know the secret of your birth?"

"Would I know the secret of my birth!" repeated Eustace, in breathless anxiety, "indeed I would; nay, almost could I purchase the knowledge of my birth with the forfeit of my life."

"Then swear, as I enjoin you," replied the Friar, "and you *shall* know it."

Eustace paused; a strong emotion seemed to agitate his bosom; he passed his hand across his forehead, and the next moment calmly replied, "Leave me, tempter. I would freely stake my life to learn the secret of my birth; but know I will not stake my soul."

"Be not thus obdurate," said the Friar; "art thou resolved thus to withstand my importunity?"

Then listen; suppose that it were in my power to prove thee of exalted birth, so that thou shouldst boldly demand and win the beauteous Isabel (for I know you love her), wouldest thou then swear?"

" You could not do it," replied Eustace, hastily.

" Are you sure of that?" rejoined the Franciscan.

" Give me some proof," said Eustace, " that you have the power, before I answer you."

" I will," replied the Franciscan. " When the Countess de Foix committed thee to the care of her lord, she gave the Count a precious ring which she said had been thy mother's. She gave it to her lord, in secret, and made him solemnly promise that the existence of that ring should never be made known to any one save thyself. And the Count also promised, that, shouldst thou live to become a knight, on the day thou shouldst be created such, he would place upon thy hand that ring; and on the morrow thou art to receive it."

Eustace pressed his hands together, and

raised his eyes in silent amazement. “ Is not this true?” continued the Franciscan: “ now, have I given proof enough that I can do what I told thee?”

“ It is most true,” replied the youth, “ and, so help me heaven ! the Count believes, as I did, that not a creature living knows of the secret of that ring, save ourselves and the Countess, who, with such strong entreaty, begged that its story might for ever rest unknown. And who art thou, thou most mysterious, most extraordinary man, who can thus awaken in my soul thoughts, hopes, expectations, that had long seemed vain, cold, and fruitless? Tell me, in pity, I beseech you, tell me more. Who am I? who is my father? does my mother live? what is my name, my county? how can I prove my birth?”

“ Stop,” said the Franciscan, “ be not so hasty; I will tell thee nothing till the oath I would enjoin has passed thy lips. Swear to keep secret what I shall *reveal*, swear to obey me in what I shall *enjoin*.”

Eustace stood like one upon the brink of a

deep and dangerous gulf, that he fain would pass, and yet feared to attempt it. He hesitated, and after a moment's silence, in which he seemed to be collecting the scattered energies of his whole mind into one strong effort, he replied in a firm tone, “ Father! repeat thy words; once more repeat them: let me hear a full, clear comprehension of their import.”

The Franciscan complied with this request.

“ Then mark me!” said Eustace, in a determined voice; “ thou hast held out such inducements, such temptations, to shake the principles of all I hold most sacred to my soul, that but for the grace of God (which now makes me strong against thy powerful tempting) I could not resist thee. Go, then, bury thy secret in eternal silence; leave me the poor, the unhappy, the base-reputed Eustace that I am, so that thou leavest me innocent; and I will be still unhappy and despised. But know, that life, nor death, nor hope of Isabel, nor even her love, shall ever make me do an act I hold a treason to the God that made me. And think not one who could

blindly take an oath, to do he knows not what, can ever hold its performance sacred."

"Then thou art worthy," exclaimed the Franciscan, "ay, worthy as my fondest hope would have thee. Eustace, thy refusal of the oath forbids me to tell thee all I could reveal, for I am but sent to thee by one who has a nearer claim to thee than I have. And only on thy swearing, strictly swearing, as I proposed to thee, am I allowed to clear up all the mystery of thy birth. But so do I revere thy principles, thy noble nature, that what I may reveal I will; and I will teach thee where thou mayest seek to learn all I am forbid to tell, save on the conditions I have named. Know then—but hush! I thought I heard a sound."

"No," said Eustace, "it was but the wind that stirred something which echoed through these long vaulted aisles. Come near the tomb, there we may speak surely, and if any one advances, we must see them ere they are close upon us."

"The night wanes apace," replied the Franciscan, "and I have much to tell thee."

“ Speak quickly, then,” said Eustace.

“ I will,” rejoined the friar; “ know, then, you are an object of envy and hatred with Sir Evan de Foix. Be careful how you act; for he aims at your ruin with the Count; and beware how you trust the crafty Prior Philip.”

“ Do you know aught, father,” said Eustace hastily, “ that should make you speak thus of the Prior? I know he is of a cold repulsive temper, with little feeling for any object of this world; but I never suspected he was dishonest in his deeds?

“ I have no proof that he is so,” replied the Franciscan; “ but I know his character is cold, crafty, and selfish. Such men are ever dangerous, and on the watch to bend to their own interests the open and unsuspecting mind. And above all, Eustace, do not trust the Count de Foix.”

“ Not trust the Count de Foix!” repeated Eustace, “ why he is my dearest friend, my benefactor, I am the child of his adoption. He is ever gracious and noble in his conduct towards me; I love him as my own soul.”

The Franciscan shook his head mournfully and sighed. "Alas! Eustace, you know him not; true, he has been all you say to you in outward act, but yet—"

"What!" exclaimed Eustace hastily, interrupting him, "how in outward act, what mean you?"

"You must not rely upon him," replied the Franciscan, "and never will you be in safety, till you have for ever bid adieu to Orthes."

"You astonish me!" said Eustace, "what can this mean? I can never cease to love De Foix; indeed, I can never cease to think the generous Count my friend."

"You have hitherto been too humble, too insignificant," continued the friar, "to excite his fears, but the time may come—" the Franciscan hesitated, and then added, "the time may come, when, possibly, the Count may change his feelings for you."

"Oh! never," said Eustace; "for I will never be ungrateful to him, never do an act of dis-honour towards him, how then can he change?"

"Alas!" replied the Franciscan, "thy ge-

nerous and open mind can believe no ill exists in any one; but the Count is capable of *treachery*."

"Oh! do not say so," exclaimed Eustace, "you do him cruel wrong, I will not believe it."

"Would to Heaven," answered the friar, "it were so! I do not wrong him, Eustace. What I must now reveal to you, I trust to your honour to keep it secret; for should the Count but know I had repeated the sad story, my life might pay the forfeit of my confidence. You will be secret?"

"Ay," said Eustace, "I will never utter what is trusted to my honour, and what being made known might injure the safety of another; you may confide in me."

"Look, then, upon this tomb," continued the Franciscan, "mark the countenance of this effigy, for it is of him whose ashes now repose beneath it that I would speak."

"I have already noted well," replied Eustace, with considerable emotion, "the extraordinary features of that countenance, and they seem living and animated in thy own."

“ Yet his, which this marble so well represents,” replied the friar, “ lie buried in this spot”—(the holy man again started)—“ I am sure I heard a step.”

“ No, no,” said Eustace impatiently, “ thy senses are acute and strong, and the least motion finds its echo in thy ear; it is nothing but the wind that sounds through these ancient vaults.”

“ Know, then,” continued the Franciscan, “ that Sir Peter Arnaut de Bearn, who lies buried here, was a very valiant and accomplished knight, noble in family, and still more noble in mind; he was, too, related to the Count de Foix. When Edward the Black Prince of England took possession of the strong castle of Lourde, in right of his duchy of Aquitaine, he appointed this Sir Peter Arnaut de Bearn (who had loyally served him) to be governor of Lourde, and regent for England of the province of Bigorre. Some time after, the French, headed by the Duke of Anjou, assaulted Lourde; but so valiantly did Sir Peter defend the castle for his prince, the gallant Edward, that the Duke, finding it useless to carry on the siege, withdrew his forces

and retired, sending a private messenger to the Count de Foix. The nature of this private conference was never known, but, from what so soon after occurred, it may be easily understood; especially as the Count feared the Duke of Anjou would invade his territories; and, on this account, he was earnest in recommending himself to the favour of the Duke. After the departure of the messenger, the Count de Foix summoned his cousin, Sir Peter Arnaut de Bearn, in an amicable manner, to attend him at Orthes. Sir Peter was advised by his brother, John de Bearn, and those who loved him, not to obey the summons of the Count; but his soul was too noble for suspicion, and, disdaining fear, he heeded not the counsel of his friends. Before he quitted Lourde, he gave the garrison and castle to the command of his brother, John de Bearn, and charged him, should he never more return, that Lourde might still be maintained for Edward of England. John took an oath to obey his commands, and that oath he faithfully fulfilled."

"I knew not the particulars of this event,"

said Eustace, “but I have heard John de Bearn is a most valiant captain.”

The Franciscan continued—“The Count received Sir Peter Arnaut de Bearn kindly, and for some days entertained him with all the outward marks of affection, so that he was lulled into security. He believed the Count had sought his presence at Orthes but for the sake of love and kindred. When, however, the time arrived that Sir Peter was to bid adieu to the Count, De Foix called him aside, and artfully proposed that he should surrender into his hands the castle of Lourde, as the Duke of Anjou suspected it was by the instigation of the Count he had so firmly maintained it for England. Sir Peter Arnaut de Bearn, unmoved by this false pretext, boldly and firmly refused his assent to such a disloyal act, which he held a treason towards his prince; and declared he would maintain Lourde for England, even to the death. ‘Dost thou say so?’ exclaimed the Count; ‘then, by this head, Sir Peter, thou hast not said it for nought!’ and, as he uttered these words, De Foix drew a dagger from beneath his vest, and foully stabbed his

noble kinsman on the instant. Sir Peter fell to the ground; he was mortally wounded; and in this state the Count caused his helpless cousin to be thrown into a dungeon, where he perished."

Eustace, whilst the Franciscan related this dreadful narrative, stood fixed in silent attention. His soul seemed wholly absorbed, and alternately swayed by strong emotions of pity and indignation. At length he exclaimed, "Is it possible? Could the Count de 'oix be guilty of such baseness? Oh friar, can it—can it be true? And must I learn to hate the friend I have so dearly loved? one to whom I have looked up through life as an example? him whom I thought the perfect model of all honour? Oh, why did you tell me this? why have you made me wretched? but alas! tell me all your sad tale, and I will strive to bear it as I ought. Would no one interfere? was there no one by, who would rush between the Count and the dagger that he drew to plunge a fellow-creature into an eternal state?"

"Yes, some there were present," continued

the Franciscan, “ but they dared not interfere ; their own lives would have been the forfeit.”

“ And if they had,” cried Eustace, “ they would have died in doing a brave act, to save a valiant man.”

“ It may be,” continued the friar, “ that the Count has since felt some remorse ; for he gave the remains of his unfortunate cousin an honourable interment, and allows a certain sum to this house for saying a yearly mass for the repose of the soul of Sir Peter Arnaut de Bearn upon the anniversary of the day of his death. He has also caused this tomb and effigy to be erected to his memory.”

Eustace paid the tribute of his tears to the memory of the brave man who had thus untimely perished. He again expressed his abhorrence of the deed, and the anguish he felt upon learning the Count had been the instrument of such cruelty. After another pause, he said, “ I thought, holy friar, that the garrison of Lourde was only composed of the base, marauding free bands, such as Edward the Black Prince led into Spain on behalf of Peter the Cruel at the battle of

Najara. How came it, then, that Sir Peter Arnaud de Bearn could be the leader of such a company?"

"They were free bands, but not so base as you deem them then," replied the Franciscan: "after the murder of their noble leader, they in a great measure changed their character; some of the bravest men left the castle, and returned to England, whilst those who remained overran and harassed, for a time, the territories of the Count de Foix. Resolute in their purpose of revenging the death of De Bearn, they cared little in what manner it was accomplished; and it was not till then that they insisted the fierce Basil le Mengeant should take part with John de Bearn in the command of Lourde; and from that hour to the present they as frequently quarrel amongst themselves as with their enemies. One evil passion, thus indulged without restraint, generally leads to farther violence: so it was with those of Lourde, till at length they became, from a garrison of brave and honourable men, who originally held the castle for England, a mere band of marauding freebooters, ready to plunder

wherever they might obtain spoil, and willing to espouse any cause that offered a chance of profit."

"And now, father," said Eustace, "tell me, I beseech you, where it is that I am to seek the person whom, you said, would reveal to me the secret of my birth."

"You must seek him at the castle of Lourde," replied the Franciscan.

"At the castle of Lourde!" repeated Eustace, "what is it you would have me do? Would you have me seek the lion in his den, join these base marauders, the sworn enemies of the Count, and then expose myself to the hazard of either being compelled to unite with them, or of lingering out a miserable existence in the dungeons of their impregnable castle? No, father, that were madness."

"Madness or not, it is necessity," said the friar; "for alone at Lourde can you ever obtain the knowledge of your birth, unless you will consent to take the oath I proposed to you."

"No, never will I do it," replied Eustace; "I would rather perish at Lourde, by ventur-

ing thither upon thy counsel, than I would live here in safety by an act so impious."

"Then there is no alternative," said the Franciscan; "you must resolve to seek the intelligence at Lourde."

"But how," inquired Eustace, "could I venture, without a seeming treason to my Lord de Foix? and if I should depart, how could I ever pass the castle gates of Lourde without a token? And even when there, whom must I seek?"

"I will tell you," replied the friar. "The Count intends, upon your becoming a knight, to send you to a distant fortress, where you are to bear letters to one of his allied barons, to bid him prepare to assist De Foix against the lord of Armagnac. Your commission ended for the service of the Count, you shall seek the castle of Lourde alone, and when you are arrived at its gates, show but this token, and you will gain admittance on the instant; the rest will then be made known to you." At these words the Franciscan took a small cross of chased gold, suspended by a chain of the same metal, from be-

neath his mantle. This he threw around the neck of Eustace. "You must depart," he continued, "on your earliest opportunity, and no harm will attend you."

Eustace, on hearing these words of instruction, looked with doubt and astonishment upon the friar. "Hast thou, reverend father," he said, "who seemest so holy, hast thou any intercourse with the dangerous and wicked garrison of Lourde? Art thou allied with John de Bearn, and the fierce Basil le Mengeant? How ought I to trust the associate of men like these? And if I am of noble birth, as you have darkly hinted, who can I there hope to find who would help me to assert it with the honour due to true nobility of blood?"

"Fear not," replied the Franciscan; "all are not base who breathe within the walls of Lourde, no more than all are just who rule within the palace of Orthes. And know, young man, that by a brother of St. Francis, the haunts of public crime and vice in the freebooters' castle are as much sought out, as the secret paths of sin in the precincts of a court. He would seek both, to

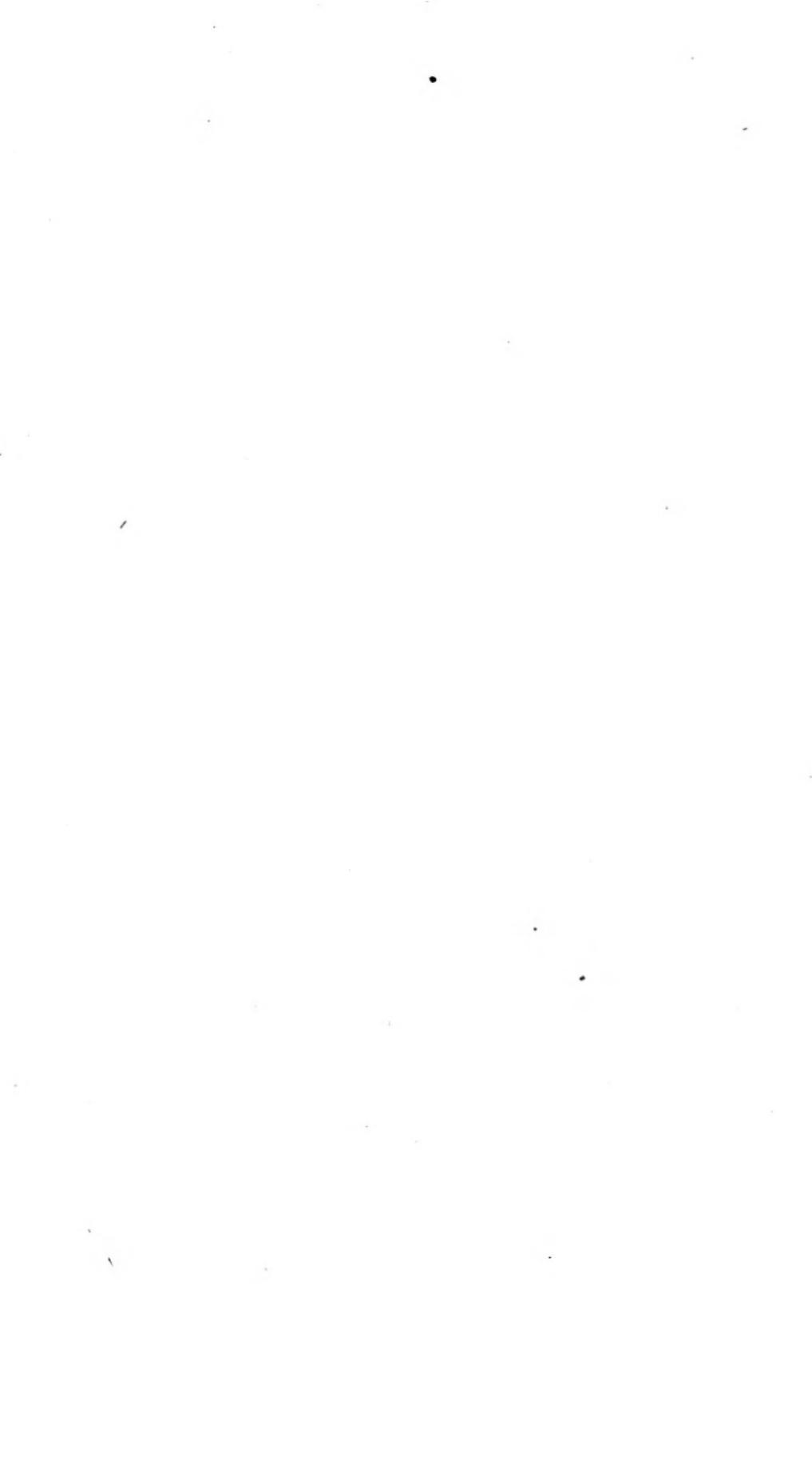
reprove both. Dost thou remember what I told thee of the ring? Canst thou then doubt?"

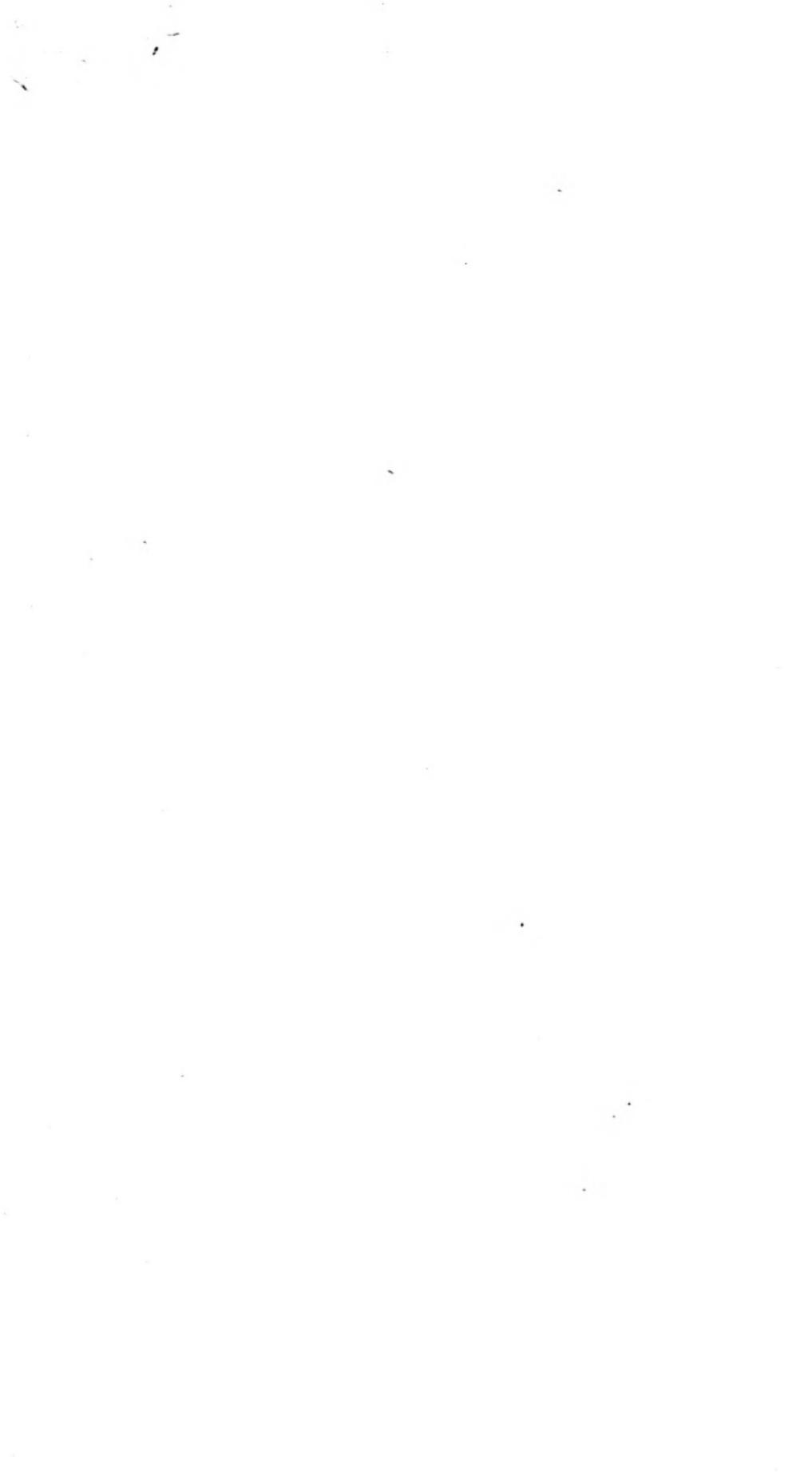
"No," said Eustace; "that is a proof beyond all doubt. I will repair to Lourde, I will abide the consequence; and may Heaven, who knows the cause that leads me thither, give it a happy issue!"

"Amen, my son," rejoined the Franciscan, "Heaven will make it prosper, for the cause is just. After to-morrow I leave Orthes, as I came hither in private and unknown. Remember my injunctions, and obey them."

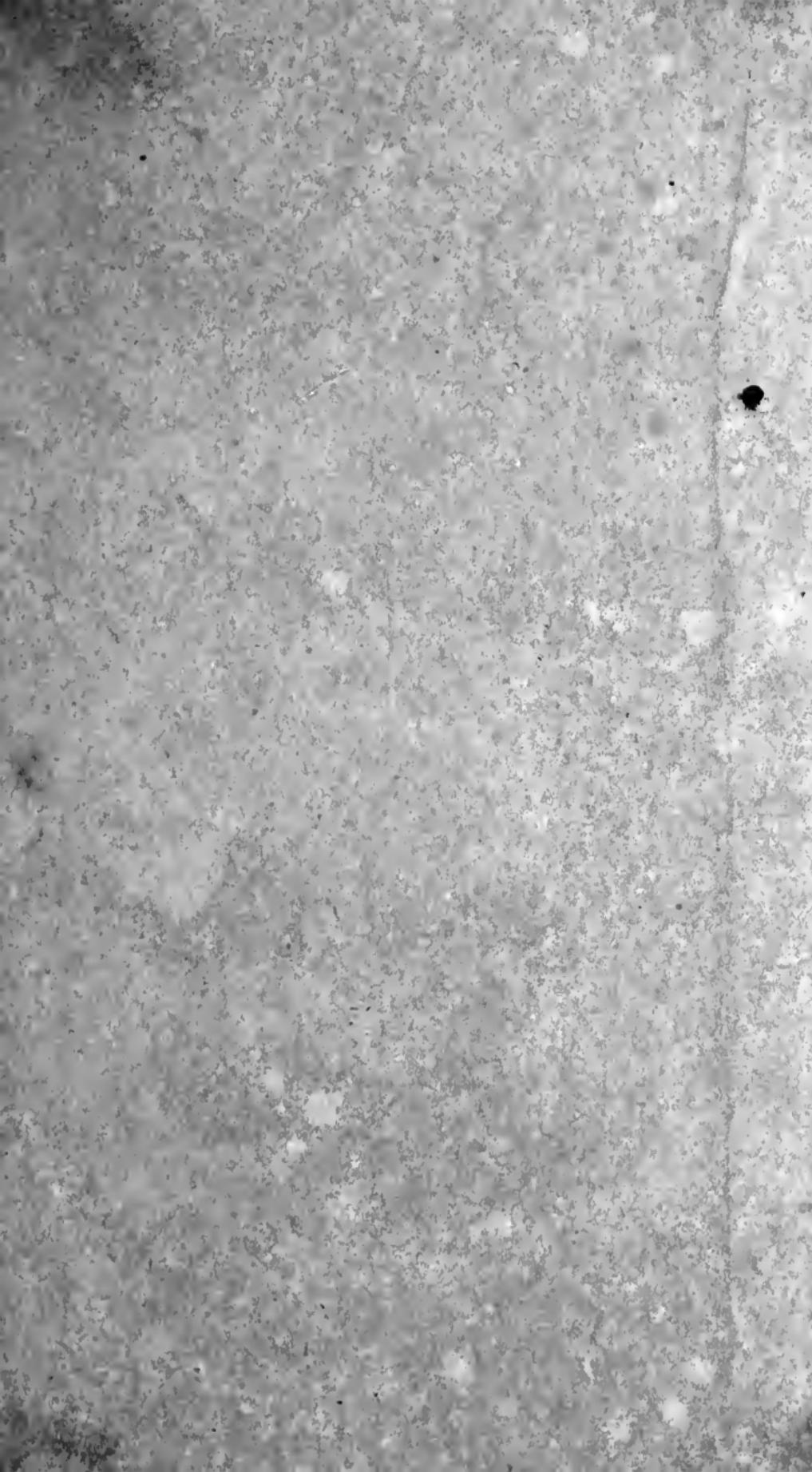
At this moment the bell of the monastery struck the hour of two. Eustace had now staid the time that completed the vigil of his arms. Ere he left the church, he again prostrated himself before the foot of the altar, and after repeating a prayer, he arose, and bidding farewell to the Franciscan, he hastened back to the castle.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY THOMAS DAVISON, WHITEFRIARS.









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